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# A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD AND ITS MAKING

A HISTORY OF

ST. PETER'S PARISH  
DORCHESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

AND OF ITS FIRST RECTOR

THE REV. PETER RONAN, P.R.

BY

S. L. EMERY

*Author of "The Inner Life of the Soul," etc.*



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By ST. PETER'S PARISH  
DORCHESTER  
MASSACHUSETTS

To  
The Holy Memory

OF THE FIRST ARCHBISHOP OF BOSTON

THE MOST REVEREND

JOHN JOSEPH WILLIAMS, D.D.

UNDER WHOM

TO THE GREATER GLORY OF ALMIGHTY GOD

AND TO THE HONOR OF HIS CHIEF APOSTLE ST. PETER

IN UNION WITH THE SEE OF PETER

THE WORK OF ST. PETER'S PARISH, DORCHESTER

WAS BEGUN

AND TO HIS SUCCESSOR IN THE APOSTOLIC OFFICE

THE MOST REVEREND

WILLIAM HENRY O'CONNELL, D.D.

OUR PRESENT ARCHBISHOP

*THIS VOLUME IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED*

*The Feast of St. Peter's Chair at Rome  
January 18, 1910*





## FOREWORD.

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At a meeting of the members of St. Peter's parish, Dorchester, called May 31, 1908, to take steps for a public recognition of the fortieth anniversary of the ordination of their beloved pastor, it was unanimously voted that not only should there be a public reception to Father Ronan and the presentation of a chalice to him, but that the record of his work in Dorchester should be put in permanent form. As the gathering of the material for the history went on, it became evident that more time than had at first been anticipated would be required in order to secure perfect accuracy and sufficient fulness of detail. The volume is now submitted to him in whose honor it was planned, with the hope that the story, as it is told in text and illustration, may serve not only as an appreciative, even if an inadequate, tribute to a noble life-work, but also as an encouragement and inspiration to all, both priests and people, under whose notice it may hereafter come.



ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE  
GRANBY STREET  
BOSTON

Boston, December 16, 1909.

THE COMMITTEE ON PARISH HISTORY,

Gentlemen:

I understand that the parishioners of St. Peter's, Dorchester, are making up a history of the parish as a testimonial to Father Peter Ronan, your pastor.

The interest you are showing in this matter is a source of great pleasure to me, and it must be a great consolation for Father Ronan to be spared by God to see the fruits of his priestly labors and to realize the happiness of those for whom he has worked arduously and constantly.

The present condition of St. Peter's parish, with its splendid parochial buildings, conveys only a small idea of the immense amount of work that it has entailed to bring about such a flourishing condition.

I sincerely hope that the testimonial you propose giving Father Ronan will bring satisfaction and joy to his heart, and that it will arouse in the hearts of all his parishioners an added feeling of devotion and loyalty to him.

I send you my cordial best wishes and my blessing upon you all.

Very sincerely yours,

*H. M. H. J. Connolly*

*Abp. Boston*



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ST. PETER'S CHURCH, EATON SQUARE, DORCHESTER, MASSACHUSETTS.  
"This is My rest for ever and ever: here will I dwell, for I have chosen it."—PSALM 131: 14.

## A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD

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N the annals of the Catholic Church we find the record of some lives that have been like flaming beacon-lights on the road to heaven, —men like Saint Paul or Saint Athanasius or Père Lacordaire, who have spoken out in clarion tones to rouse their fellow-men from torpor, or to defend the Faith against attacks of error, or to preach with astounding eloquence the word of God.

Then there have been other men, like Saint Joseph, Thomas à Kempis, Frederic Ozanam, who have done their work very quietly; and only by degrees did people begin to realize how great that work has been.

Every good priest, who for many years has labored faithfully in the service of God and His Church, whether in the ranks of the militant warriors defending the Faith or in the quieter paths of the upbuilders or safeguarders thereof, deserves our respectful homage.

To-day it is our privilege to consider the life of one who for nearly half a century has served at God's altar, and has been the pastor of one parish, the father and friend of one flock, quietly doing a vast work that even his own people scarcely realize, laying down health, strength, time, and means in its behalf. Such a silent life has it been, so peaceful, unruffled, and calm in its paths, that few have sufficiently understood that in its very quietness lay its extraordinary strength and success. Let us endeavor to make some slight sketch of this consecrated, useful, and singularly silent life.

## *A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD*

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### LINKS WITH SAINT PETER'S CHAIR AT ROME.

The year 1908 was the Golden Jubilee year of ordination of our Holy Father, Pope Pius X, to the sacred priesthood, and it was also the Centenary of the foundation of the diocese of Boston.

The coincidence of these two events is a noteworthy and a pleasing one, and it is a type or sign of the myriad links that bind the hearts of Catholics to the Holy See. In Church History no link of this chain is unimportant. Therefore, it is quite fitting to bring into prominence a Ruby Jubilee occurring in this same year, 1908,—the fortieth anniversary of ordination to the priesthood of a faithful pastor in the Boston archdiocese, the Reverend Peter Ronan, permanent rector, as he also was the builder, of St. Peter's Church, Dorchester, Massachusetts.

This church is founded literally upon a rock, and is, singularly enough, built of the rock from which its strong foundations were quarried. It is a living image of the Apostle Saint Peter, whose name it bears, and it preaches daily Christ's promise to that great Apostle: "Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Over the surrounding landscape the magnificent structure rises grandly, visible out at sea, and dominating hill and plain. Like a city set on a hill, it cannot be hid. Yet, fifty years ago a man might have been deemed an object of ridicule to his neighbors, had he ventured to predict that a Catholic church like that would ever be seen in the limits of Dorchester.

Scattered through the town's wide limits, scarcely two hundred Catholic families were to be found. Religious prejudice and



## *LINKS WITH SAINT PETER'S CHAIR*

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ignorance of Catholic truths and practices may be said to have been prevalent among the Protestants. On the night of July 4, 1854, a church begun by Catholics, about three miles from this present site, had been blown up by gunpowder by misguided men. Yet to Dorchester, in the year 1872, the beloved and revered late Archbishop (then Bishop) Williams sent a young priest, not four years on the mission, to form and guide a new parish of the Catholic families, and the considerable number of unmarried Catholic men and women, employed by Protestants, in the town. The wisdom of that great prelate of Boston is justified by visible tokens to-day. The words of the prophet Isaias (lx. 22) may fittingly and reverently be applied to St. Peter's parish in Dorchester:—

“The least shall become a thousand, and a little one a most strong nation: I the Lord will suddenly do this thing in its time.”

And pastor and people of St. Peter's with humble gratitude reply:—

“Not to us, O Lord, not to us; but to Thy Name give glory: for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake. This is the Lord's doing: and it is wonderful in our eyes.”

### FATHER RONAN'S YOUTH.

The Reverend Peter Ronan was born September 4, 1844, in the town of Mullingar, County Westmeath, Ireland. His parents were Michael Ronan and Margaret Dunigan. After his father's death the family came to this country, and settled in Lawrence, Massachusetts. Father Ronan was only seven years old when he left Ireland.

In the city of Lawrence, as pastor of the Church of the Immaculate Conception, there was a saintly old priest, the Reverend Father Taaffe, who had opened a classical school for boys. In this school young Peter Ronan was enrolled.

The lad's vocation to the sacred priesthood was one of those common to the favored Irish race, a supernaturally natural wish to become a priest, expressed at an early age, and carried into effect without opposition or delay. In 1865 the youth went to St. Joseph's Seminary, Troy, New York, the then provincial seminary for New England and New York, and there he was ordained, June 6, 1868, by the Right Reverend Francis P. McFarland, D.D., Bishop of Hartford.

By a somewhat remarkable coincidence, Father Ronan celebrated his first Mass in the hospital-chapel of the Sisters of Charity in Troy, those Sisters who were to be in a special manner connected with his lifelong pastorate, since St. Mary's Infant Asylum, Dorchester, under their charge, and founded in 1872, is in St. Peter's parish.

The young priest's first appointment was as assistant to the Reverend L. S. McMahon, pastor of St. Lawrence's Church, New Bedford, Massachusetts, and afterward Bishop of Hartford. Father Ronan remained for about four years in New

## *FATHER RONAN'S YOUTH*

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Bedford, where he is still affectionately remembered. In 1872, however, the diocese of Providence was formed, with the Right Reverend Thomas Hendricken, D.D., as its first Bishop, and its limits included New Bedford and other adjacent towns and cities in Massachusetts.

One very remarkable incident occurred, during Father Ronan's curacy, that deserves recording here. In Fall River there was then only one priest, Father Murphy, and he was to have, for the first time in his parish, which comprised the entire city, the devotion of the Forty Hours. Accordingly, he invited about a dozen priests, Father Ronan among them, to help in hearing the confessions, and informed his people that they would have the opportunity of making this beautiful devotion and would have many priests to administer the Sacrament of Penance. In the afternoon the work was comparatively easy, and at six o'clock the priests went into the house for supper.

At half-past six, however, when they went out to resume their task, to their amazement the church was filled. Men were there with their dinner-pails, who had stopped on their way home from work: even up in the gallery were earnest, faithful people, waiting patiently for their turn. At midnight some of the priests succumbed, and went into the house. But four of them, the young curate from New Bedford among them, went on bravely until three in the morning, when, worn out, with swimming heads and exhausted brains, they said they must take some rest. The pastor told the waiting hundreds that they might sleep on the benches in the church until the confessors returned; and at 5.30 they brought the great work to its glorious close. One thinks, in hearing this story, how the saintly Jean Vianney, curé of Ars, sat in the confessional for hour after hour. Father Ronan, however, had no confessional, but sat

## *A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD*

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all that time at the end of a pew, while the penitents knelt beside him. For three months afterwards he felt the strain of that night's very unusual task.

In New Bedford he and Father McMahon were the only priests, and, as the latter was often away, he entrusted to his youthful but gifted curate the supervision of the men at work on the fine new St. Lawrence's Church that Mr. Patrick Keely, architect of so many churches and cathedrals in America, had designed. It was there that Father Ronan served his apprenticeship and was prepared for the remarkable work that he was to perform later in Dorchester, in the erection of the noble buildings of St. Peter's parish.

As to Father Ronan's spiritual work in New Bedford, keen, sweet memories still remain of his devotion to the sick, the sorrowing, the sufferer, the sinner,—things, some of them, too sacred and too beautiful to be recorded anywhere, except in the hearts of those who knew them and in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Children were devoted to him, seizing his hands and skipping beside him on the city streets. So dear was he to the people that when he returned to New Bedford, to bid farewell, after his first visit of inspection in Dorchester, he found that his first flock had raised a purse of over a thousand dollars for him as a parting gift; "and this came in very conveniently," he says in all simplicity, "for my new parish."



## *FIRST YEARS IN DORCHESTER*

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### FATHER RONAN'S FIRST YEARS IN DORCHESTER.

Father Ronan himself has told how Bishop Hendricken asked him to remain in his diocese, but, when he declined, being desirous to remain in the Boston limits, the Bishop said that he had heard an old clergyman in Hartford remark that one could not successfully tempt a Boston priest to leave the Boston diocese. So Father Ronan came home, presented himself to Bishop Williams in the fall of 1872, and was assigned to Dorchester. The entire population did not then exceed 13,000.

After a tour of inspection through the territory the young pastor approached the lot of land selected by Bishop Williams for a location for the new church. On the lot was an old house. The surrounding land was one solid bed of rock, with a derrick in operation, and a few men excavating stone. This property was in debt for about \$11,000, its original purchase price. A general house-to-house collection had been taken up at the time, which netted \$500. This money went to pay expenses on the property previously incurred, so that Father Ronan really had no church, and not one dollar to start with. This, in short, was the condition of affairs confronting him at Dorchester before the New Bedford purse came to him.

What a beautiful scene lay before the young pastor, as he entered upon his kingdom that autumn afternoon! Standing on the massive rock summit, where excavations for the church foundations had already been begun, his eyes rested on the Blue Hills, fair in the autumn haze, and on the great elms of Dorchester, swaying softly in the breeze; and, far off as he could see, were the blue waters of Dorchester Bay that lapped the eastern confines of his parish, his people's home. But

## *A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD*

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the beauty of the scene was scarcely thought of by the young priest, whose mind was filled with other things. So few Catholics in that wide expanse of Dorchester, so little money to begin with; and he did not know yet what generous hearts they had!

The pastor himself, moreover, had no worldly goods, but he was blessed with unusual health, unusual common sense, unusual patience and placidity of spirit. He was genial, persevering; simple as a child and deep as a well; a man who told his flock "not to get the ill will of anyone, but to take people as you find them, and make the best of them"; a man who could afford to wait God's time, and who never seemed to hurry in the doing of his work, yet has accomplished wonders.

He faced his flock in Lyceum Hall the second Sunday in October, 1872, and probably neither he nor they once thought, and no vision told them, that, when thirty-six years had gone, that handful of people would have grown into the largest congregation in Dorchester, outnumbering all the non-Catholic congregations together; that theirs would be the richest church property in the place, and that their youthful pastor, unknown to their neighbors, a stranger, a Catholic, would be honored and revered and praised by all for his great works and his blameless life.

One who saw him that day speaks of the deep impression made by the young pastor as he came to Lyceum Hall for the first Mass of thousands of Masses he was yet to say in Dorchester. Brown, curling locks formed a sort of halo around a face so open and fair and good that it was like an innocent child's. He seemed as young as an altar-boy, yet then and ever he preserved the dignity of the priest. At once the people's heart was gained to him: they were ready to follow at his call. Then





## *FIRST YEARS IN DORCHESTER*

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came his dear old mother and his sister Mary, and the cottage was made a peaceful household where the simple life was exemplified without any talk about it, under difficulties that few people in the parish meet to-day. The water used there, for instance, had to be brought from the Eaton house, and then it froze in the sleeping-rooms in the winter. But the pastor's fresh young face kept ever its quiet smile of contentment, and people came to that little dwelling as if the parish were one household, and that was the centre. Mass was said there, except on Sundays, in one of the tiny rooms opening out from the little front hall. Thither people came on holydays and knelt on the steps and the piazza and the ground. Confessions were heard there. Over the household presided the holy, prayerful, quiet-hearted, slow-tongued Irish mother, setting an example of reverence of demeanor and of charity and kindness of speech to all who came. The real acting housekeeper was her faithful daughter, whose services were countless and tireless, and, in those early days,—let it be known here,—were unremunerated. They had their living, those happy three, and they were content with that, so long as the parish prospered, and the church rose higher, stone by stone.

From the autumn of 1872 until the autumn of 1875, for three whole years, Father Ronan worked single-handed. No other priest shared his labors. It was he who said the Masses, baptized the children, heard the confessions, and in those days practically every one went to him,—they did not think of going elsewhere. It was he who had the sick calls, going everywhere among those scattered families in that wide field, carrying into those suffering homes the blessing of his kindly face with the saving graces of the Church's sacramental help. "His face is a benediction," said of him a non-Catholic neighbor,



## *A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD*

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well known on Meeting House Hill. He it was who had all the First Communion classes, and at whose knee the children made their first confession. He heard everybody's sorrows and trials, and taught them peace and resignation by his own unruffled calm. By his own example, too, he taught contentment and cheerful self-sacrifice. "I don't believe he had a new suit for five years," is said of him. He had another use for his money, and the people followed his lead. What wonder they gave when he was always giving? "If you raise so much for the collection, I will return it to the church," he said, on Easter or Christmas, hardly thinking they would raise the sum; but they more than raised it, and into the church it went. At fairs and concerts they all worked hard together, he first among them. Non-Catholics gave, for there were many fine, faithful, hard-working Catholic girls living in Protestant families in Dorchester, and people were very glad a pastor had come, so that their help might have a church of their own not far away. What splendid workers for the church those girls proved to be; how many dollars they gave toward its erection and support; what examples they set in the families where they lived! When the pastor went to the houses where they worked, a respectful welcome met him, and non-Catholic dollars were often added to the generous sums that his own parishioners gave. As we recall those girls who aided St. Peter's, we think that a statue to Saint Zita, patroness of all faithful servants, ought to be placed in St. Peter's Church, near to the statue of that holiest and noblest of all women, the Virgin-Mother of the world's Redeemer, Mary the Immaculate, who in answer to the heaven-sent message said in her humility, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord."

## *THE BEGINNING OF ST. PETER'S*

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### THE SEED OF ST. PETER'S CATHOLIC CHURCH IN DORCHESTER.

The town of Dorchester, Massachusetts (since 1870 a part of the city of Boston), was founded in the year 1630, on the sixth day of the month of June, by a colony of 140 persons who sailed from Plymouth, England, in the ship "Mary and John." Their voyage lasted seventy days.

In the autumn of 1631 the first meeting-house was built, as a town hall for political gatherings, a place for worship and other religious purposes, and a depot for military stores. It was a rude little structure of logs and thatch. This was the cradle from which came the well-known "First Church" of Dorchester, now standing on Meeting House Hill. But those who worship there preserve no longer the so-called "Orthodox faith" of their Puritan ancestors. They have become Unitarians, while the "Orthodox" assemble in the "Second Church," at the corner of Centre and Washington Streets, built in 1806.

In the rear of the "First Church" stands the Mather School; and to the right of the church, as you face it, is Lyceum Hall, built in 1839, for purposes of literary and social entertainment, in behalf of the townspeople.

In that hall, about the year 1847, the Episcopalians began to hold services; and in 1849 they built a church. Other denominations came to Dorchester, notably the Baptists and the Methodists; but who gave heed to the few faithful Irish, who in cold and heat plodded their weary way to "Tommy's Rock," as the site of St. Joseph's Church, Roxbury, was familiarly called, to SS. Peter and Paul's Church, South Boston, or to St. Gregory's Church, Milton?

## *A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD*

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In the year 1858 a small Sunday-school was begun for the Catholic children of Dorchester, at a section known as Glover's Corner, under the very shadow of Meeting House Hill. This good work was started by two friends, Miss Elizabeth Higgins and Miss Margaret Sullivan, now Mrs. James Brick, and mother of the late Rev. James J. Brick, C.S.S.R.

Miss Higgins and Miss Sullivan visited the scattered Catholic families in Dorchester to ask if the little ones could attend the school, and they were cordially welcomed. At first the pupils assembled in a carpenter's shop, owned by Mr. William Clark (an old "Forty-niner" of the California gold-fever days), who operated the saw-mill, and lived on Commercial Street.

The shop, too, was on Commercial Street, a small, old-fashioned tenement building, opposite Linden Street. Into the little room were placed nine benches without backs, costing seventy-five cents apiece; and about fifty children came to school in the carpenter's shop, placed thus, very evidently, under Saint Joseph's protection.

In the autumn the two teachers were joined in their work by Miss Clara F. Sawyer, who lived on Savin Hill Avenue beyond the present railroad bridge. Miss Sawyer was a convert from Episcopalianism, the only Catholic in her family. She had been received into the Church by Bishop Fitzpatrick, third Bishop of Boston, 1844-66. Her godmother was Mrs. Sarah Johnston, a woman of unusual beauty of mind and person, who had known in her childhood Bishop Cheverus and Father Matignon, and had, in her early married life, dwelt in what was once the old Ursuline Convent on Franklin Street. The family, later, removed to Dorchester, and thus became part of St. Peter's original congregation.

In the fall the Sunday-school moved into a currier's shop



## *ST. PETER'S IN DORCHESTER*

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on Commercial Street, near the gas-house. Miss Sawyer gave a much-needed stove; and the pupils' fathers paid for the long funnel thereof, running the length of the shop and costing nine dollars.

The shop belonged to Mr. Oliver Glover, who lived at the corner of Dorchester Avenue and Linden Street. The rent was seventy-five cents a Sunday, and the seventy-five children then attending were asked to bring a penny apiece every Sunday to pay the rent. The teachers had to keep the place clean and heated. Their pupils came from Neponset Avenue and the Upper Road, as well as from Commercial Point and Savin Hill and the nearer neighborhood.

Dr. Archibald McDonald helped with the teaching for a year. The Reverend Father Lyndon of SS. Peter and Paul's Church, South Boston, was the first priest to visit the school, and his first visit occurred on the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, August 15, 1858. To the great delight of the pupils, he presented them with medals, which were indeed highly prized gifts. Father John Flatley also, attending the still more distant missions in Canton and Sharon, would sometimes call at the school.

After three or four years, as the gas company had to make improvements in their buildings, the Sunday-school was moved again, and this time into a carpenter's shop once more, owned by Mrs. Glover, and situated near Glover's Corner. As a night-school for men was started about the same time in the same building, half the rent was assumed by the men. The Sunday-school remained in this building for several years. St. Gregory's was set off as a parish in 1862, including the towns of Milton and Dorchester as far as the Boston line. The Reverend Thomas McNulty was appointed pastor. Hitherto this

## *A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD*

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wide district had belonged to SS. Peter and Paul's. Father McNulty came to hear confessions on Saturday afternoons in the room used by the Sunday-school, and in 1869 he began to say Mass on Sundays in Lyceum Hall on Meeting House Hill, to which place the Sunday-school was then transferred under the very successful superintendency of Mr. John O'Brien.

Miss Higgins (who died November, 1909) and Miss Sullivan had taught, in all, about seven years; and, when they left, Miss Sawyer had continued the work, aided by some of the girls who had grown up under her tuition. This holy woman finally became a Tertiary of the Order of St. Dominic; and, after a life of self-denial, prayer, and devoted service, she died, a loyal and happy child of the Catholic Church, February 20, 1902, in Salem, Massachusetts.

Father McNulty died in 1875, and was succeeded by the Rev. William H. Fitzpatrick, the present pastor and Father Ronan's intimate friend. Since his advent four new parishes have been formed from Dorchester's mother-parish, St. Gregory's, of which St. Peter's was the first offshoot. These are St. Anne's, Neponset, St. Matthew's, Norfolk Street, St. Mark's, Ashmont, St. Angela's, Mattapan. The town of Milton has been part of St. Gregory's parish from its beginning, and the church is so very near the dividing line of the Milton district that people were accustomed to speak of "Milton Church" and "going up to Milton to church," reserving the distinctive name of "Dorchester" for the parts more nearly related to Meeting House Hill, which had been the historical centre of Dorchester for two hundred and fifty years. This fact explains the term "Milton Church, parish," etc., when used in this book.

## *THE SITE AND PLANS OF ST. PETER'S*

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### THE SITE AND PLANS OF ST. PETER'S.

With a view to the future needs of the district, a large lot of land was purchased on East Street; but, two years after, a more central and far more desirable site on Bowdoin Street, opposite the old Eaton house, came into the market, and a committee of Catholic men, Messrs. Norton, Ryan, Lynch, and McGrath, waited on Bishop Williams to acquaint him with the fact. The Bishop visited the site, and directed Mr. Lee, a real estate agent on State Street, to secure it for the diocese. He bought it for thirty-five cents a foot; in all, \$11,200.

The land ran back on Percival Avenue, and on this lot was a house known as the Percival Cottage, where an old navy officer, Captain "Jack" Percival, had lived. He had been commander of the United States frigate "Constitution," "Old Ironsides." The cottage was moved back, after the purchase, and was occupied, until it became Father Ronan's home, by Mr. John O'Brien, then superintendent of the Sunday-school. To Mr. O'Brien's devotion to parish interests high tribute should be paid.

Father McNulty planned to erect a church that would seat 700 persons. It was to be of brick, with a stone basement. The architect's design had been accepted, and the work of excavation had been begun. It was at this critical stage of affairs that Father Ronan arrived on the scene. With prophetic eye he saw the growth that was to come with the future, and he determined, if possible, to place there a church that would meet the future's needs.

But a serious difficulty lay in his way. He saw that, in order to realize the splendid church that he had in vision, it

## *A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD*

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would be necessary to discard the plans already made, and it also seemed to him wise to secure the services of the famous architect, Mr. Keely, of New York, with whom he had become acquainted during his curacy in New Bedford.

These proposals seemed to the prudent Bishop, and to the parishioners as well, very audacious on the part of so young a priest. Mr. Keely was then the one great Catholic architect in the country: his services were in demand far and near. How could he watch over the construction of such a splendid building with sufficient care? Little did the Bishop foresee the patient, constant, personal supervision that was to be given by Father Ronan, not only to St. Peter's Church, but to the other buildings which he has erected, at a much less cost and in a better manner than if built by a contractor. Thousands of dollars have been saved to the parish in this way. After much deliberation the Bishop consented, and it was determined to erect a stone church to seat 1,200. The new pastor was quick to realize the value of the quarry of Roxbury pudding stone, which ran in a massive ledge along the edge of his property, and he determined that it should furnish the material of which the structure was to be built. It is difficult for us, with the throngs of people now flocking to eight Masses in that very church on Sundays, to appreciate what undaunted courage was implied by these propositions of the young pastor.

Mr. Nahum Capen is still gratefully remembered for his kindness in allowing the stone from the quarry to be thrown into his adjacent field, and for letting it lie there as long as necessary. Except for this favor the stone would have had to be carted to a distance and then back again, causing much extra trouble and expense.

As the people, after Mass in Lyceum Hall, Sunday after



## *THE SITE AND PLANS OF ST. PETER'S*

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Sunday, came to view the work of the preceding week, and saw the great space which the future church was to occupy, they shook their heads and almost doubted their young pastor's wisdom. It seemed an insignificant number of Catholics through whom to build so great a work, and none were wealthy, yet the spirit that was in them was equal to the undertaking.

How nobly this generous people responded to their young pastor's call, and how unremittingly the pastor worked, may be gauged from the fact that the first collection, made in the autumn of 1872, when he came to them, amounted to \$4,500. In the spring of 1873 a fair cleared \$5,000; and in the fall of 1873 another collection amounted to \$5,000. In the spring of 1874 another fair netted \$7,000. This made a sum total of \$21,500 in one and one-half years. The pastor himself says that he cannot tell how he did it, but that he felt no fear of anything.

On the 23d of August, 1873, the corner-stone of the church was laid by Bishop Williams, and the sermon on that occasion was delivered by the Rev. Father Freitag, C.S.S.R., of the Mission Church, Roxbury. Work went on so rapidly that the first Mass was said in the lower church Easter Day, 1875. Easter fell early that year, on March 28. In that same year New England was made an archdiocese by Pope Pius IX, and the Most Reverend John Joseph Williams, D.D., was made Metropolitan, the pallium being conferred May 2, 1875. In the fall of that year the Archbishop assigned to St. Peter's Church the Reverend James J. Chittick, Father Ronan's first assistant and cherished companion, and dear to his mother as another son. It will thus be seen that for three full years Father Ronan worked single-handed, having no priest to help him until some months after the church was sufficiently com-

## *A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD*

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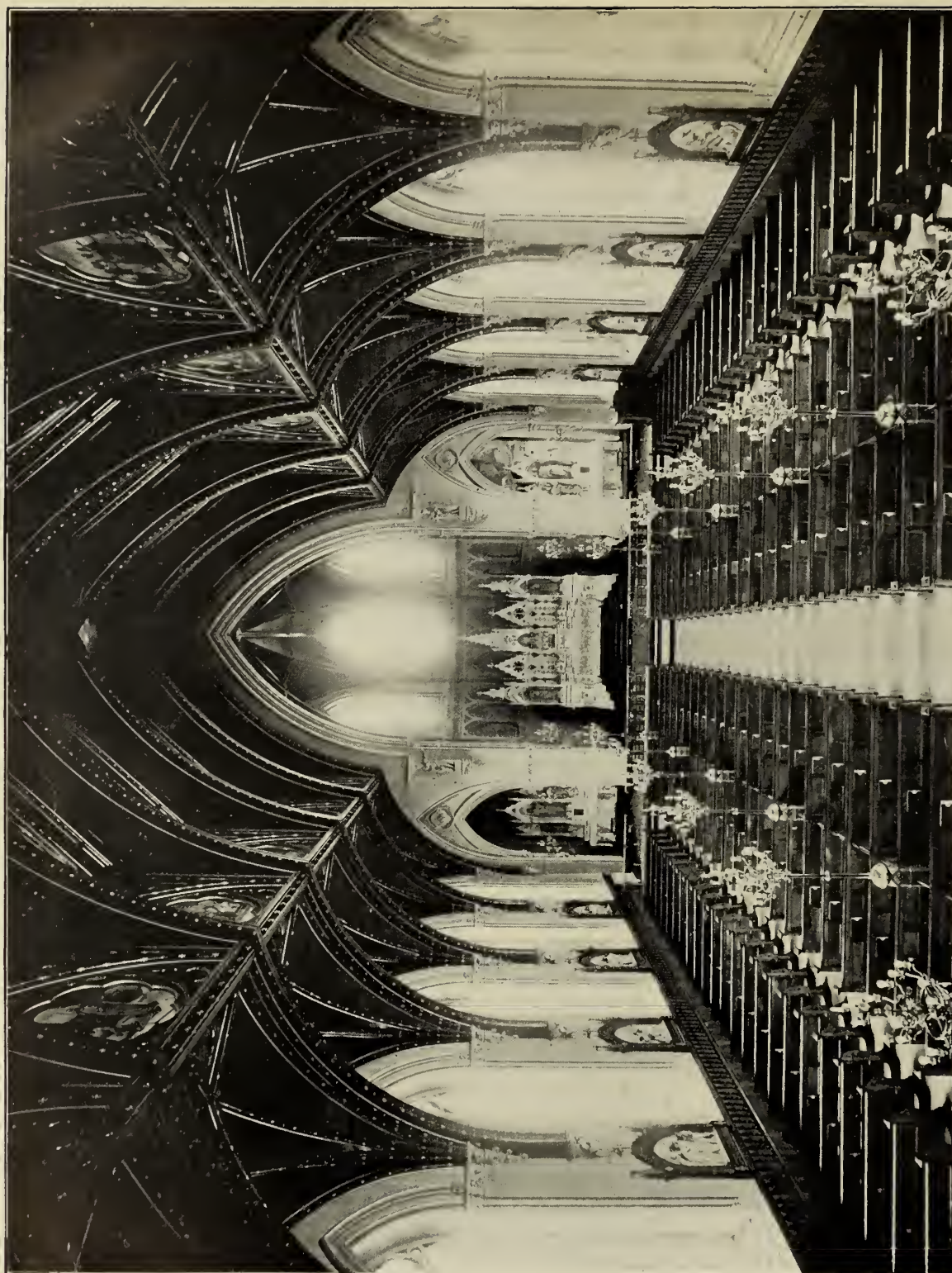
pleted for Mass to be celebrated there. The upper church was not finished and dedicated until February 18, 1884.

Pontifical High Mass was celebrated on that joyous day by the Most Reverend Archbishop Williams. The sermon was delivered by the Right Reverend James J. Healy, D.D., Bishop of Portland. In the evening Solemn Pontifical Vespers were sung by the Right Reverend Lawrence J. McMahon, D.D., Bishop of Hartford, with whom for four years Father Ronan had labored in New Bedford. The sermon was preached by the Reverend Jeremiah O'Connor, S.J., president of Boston College. The music, that day, was rendered by an augmented choir of one hundred voices, under the leadership of the talented organist of St. Peter's, the late Mr. Joseph G. Lennon, and an orchestra of forty pieces. Then was sung for the first time the famous piece of music, "Tu es Petrus," composed in honor of the occasion by Mr. Lavallé, then director of the choir of the Cathedral of the Holy Cross, Boston. Mr. Lavallé came to St. Peter's for the dedication, in order to direct his own music.

In 1891, at the cost of \$7,000, the grand square tower of St. Peter's Church, visible for many miles around, was completed, with the addition of the beautiful finials at the top. In the same year, the graceful small turret on the side towards the parochial residence was erected. \*Thus stood complete the glorious church, every stone a sacrifice freely and lovingly made by a grateful people to the Divine Redeemer Who had given Himself, first, in sacrifice for them.







INTERIOR VIEW OF ST. PETER'S CHURCH, FACING THE HIGH ALTAR.  
"Behold the tabernacle of God with men."—APOCALYPSE 21: 3.



ST. PETER'S CHURCH AND ITS SURROUNDINGS.

The façade of St. Peter's Church is the picture in the frame formed by Eaton Square, perhaps the most beautiful square in the whole city of Boston.

The church was to have had a different front entrance from that it now has; for the land then had a far more easy slope on Percival Street. The city, however, changed the grades and bought the old Eaton home opposite St. Peter's, where the pretty common and fine fountain now are; a distinct advantage to the vicinity, but necessitating the steep steps that lead to the main entrance of the church.

The façade is pierced by three massive doorways and a splendid window, the archivolt of which indicates the finishing lines of the ceiling. In plan the church is rectangular, of nine bays. An apsidal recess provides altar and sanctuary space.

The church is 165 feet long by 70 feet wide, and seats 1,200 people; and the basement, which is 13 feet high and well lighted, can accommodate 1,300 more, thus making the entire seating capacity of the church 2,500. The side walls are 42 feet above the sills of the basement windows, and the front gable is 97 feet above the grade of Bowdoin Street. There is a large granite stoop in front of the church, with steps winding up to the three front doors. On the north side of the building there is a tower 150 feet high and 20 feet square, and on the south side a turret 100 feet high and 12 feet square at the base. The exterior of the church is neatly trimmed with Quincy and Cape Ann granite.

The ceiling is finished in wood, and is divided into panels of different sizes and shapes. There are four distinct sections

## *A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD*

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in the roof, which rests entirely upon the side walls, thus doing away with the necessity of columns, and making a very clear and cheerful auditorium. The distance from the floor to the ceiling is 65 feet, and between the side walls 62 feet. The sheathing in all the panels, and all the arches and mouldings in the entire ceiling, are stained mahogany.

The high altar and the two side altars in the upper church are designed to conform with the architectural style of the interior. The table is of selected Italian marble, the columns and panels being of onyx and Siena marble. A beautiful reredos finishes each of the three altars. Canopied niches, supported by onyx columns and decorated with appropriate carving and tracery, and with panels which are inlaid with mosaic of choice marbles, provide places in the high altar for finely modelled statues, one of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and one of Saint Patrick. The tabernacle, the centre from which radiates all spiritual life within the church, is very beautifully and elaborately decorated, while over the niche for the Exposition is an imposing pinnaced canopy, finished with mouldings and crockets in the same Gothic treatment. A beautiful and attractive statue of the Blessed Virgin and one of Saint Joseph occupy the central niches in the respective side altars.

The background of all the tracery panels and spandrels is tinted in rich mosaic colors. The soffits of the main arches under the trusses, as well as all longitudinal cornices, are also finished in mosaic colors. The quarter rounds and the outside angles of the ribs and mouldings are banded with ebony and gold. The entire woodwork of the ceiling is varnished, and presents a solid and finished appearance. The plain plastering of the church is tinted a greenish gray, the stucco mouldings are a pearl gray, and all the large members of the mouldings a

## *ST. PETER'S AND ITS SURROUNDINGS*

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light pink color. The sanctuary walls, from floor to ceiling, are marbled in various colors to harmonize with the different kinds of marble in the altars.

There are thirty-one fine paintings in the church, representing various historic scenes from the Old and New Testaments. The painting on the Gospel side of the altar represents Christ giving the keys to Saint Peter, and the one on the Epistle side represents Him giving the commission to Saint Peter to feed His lambs and His sheep. Three large picture windows in the sanctuary represent the Saviour in the centre, with Saint John on His right hand and Saint James on His left. The frescoes were painted by the well-known artist Lamprecht, of the firm of Lamprecht & Kingling, New York, at that time the most distinguished Catholic church decorators we had in the United States.

The beautiful set of Munich Stations of the Cross, valued at about \$2,000, is considered amongst the best in the diocese.

In 1903, Father Ronan renovated the chapel or lower church. It is exceptionally well lighted, and seats 1,300 persons comfortably. An ornamental metal ceiling, new pews, opalescent windows, shrines of the Sacred Heart and of Saint Anthony, were put in at that time. The shrines are of faience, similar to the work originated by the famous Della Robbia family in Italy during the fifteenth century. The terra-cotta is finished in a dull glaze enamel. Pilasters in the composite order, supported by a marble base, carry a circular pediment, the lunette of which is enriched by two angels in relief, crowning the beautiful statues, each recessed in a niche and enclosed in a frame of angels' heads in relief. Arabesque ornaments in relief fill the panels of the pilasters. The soft enamel of gold and green and blue in which the faience is finished adds to the beauty of the modelling.

## *A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD*

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### ST. PETER'S RECTORY.

In the year 1886 the large, stately and commodious Rectory was finished, on a lot of land adjacent to the church on the west side, purchased from Mr. Nahum Capen; and Father Ronan moved into it from the old Percival Cottage, where, despite the manifold inconveniences, he had known many happy days.

The house is a three-story structure of brick, built to meet the requirements of a parish like St. Peter's, with offices, parlors, dining-room, and kitchen on the first floor, and apartments for the pastor and his assistants on the floors above. It is substantially finished in oak, with painted walls and hardwood floors. Like the church, the exterior of the house is covered with a luxuriant growth of beautiful ivy. The architect of the house as of the church was Mr. Patrick Keely.

The Percival Cottage was renovated, and was for some years known as St. Peter's Convent, being occupied by the school Sisters. After the erection of the Parish School it received the addition of a long two-story ell. Its walls are indeed saturated with prayers and holy thoughts. There for years the Blessed Sacrament found a home; there in the tiny chapel has many a Mass been said. May it long remain a portion of St. Peter's Church property, for it is a relic of the earlier days. Little did old Admiral Jack Percival dream to what sacred uses his home would eventually be put.

It may be questioned whether Father Ronan's venerable mother ever felt as truly at home in the large Rectory as she had felt in the cottage, where she could always be near her beloved son, and where she used to sit, perfectly happy



## *ST. PETER'S RECTORY*

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and contented, in profound silence, in the low, quaint room while Father Ronan read his Breviary. God alone knows how many prayers she said, and how her simple goodness and daily example were a means of grace to the parish. She died two years after she removed to St. Peter's Rectory, with her son's ministering care tenderly given her to the very end. From his anointed hands she received the last Sacraments, and on the Blessed Virgin's birthday, September 8, 1888, a Saturday, she died.

Father Ronan's mother was indeed a type of the old-time saintly Irish mother, who had higher gifts than the halls of secular knowledge can bestow,—the gifts of faith, hope, charity, and obedience to the will of God.

Mrs. Ronan left another son, well known and loved in the Boston diocese, the late Reverend Michael Ronan, pastor of St. Peter's Church, Lowell, Massachusetts, five years an older man than Father Peter, and five years a younger priest. He had worked at Saint Joseph's trade, as a carpenter, to help his younger brother go through his studies for the priesthood; and then, when that great aim was realized, he also gave himself to the priestly office, and Father Peter helped him through. Father Michael Ronan accomplished a great work in Lowell. He built there a splendid church, which is called, like his brother's, St. Peter's. He was a striking exemplification of the best type of priest in the Boston archdiocese; and he won the affection of the entire city of Lowell. Indeed, he was looked upon as the father and friend of the whole people, and they used to come to him from all quarters for comfort and advice. His silver jubilee as pastor occurred Dec. 20, 1908. On July 3, 1909, came his holy and peaceful death.

Their only sister, Mary, remained in St. Peter's Rectory

## *A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD*

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until her mother's death. Then she was married to Mr. David Welch, one of the early members of the parish. Mrs. Welch is gratefully remembered in St. Peter's parish for her kindly heart that made the people welcome, for the good and prudent management of her brother's home, and for the thousands of dollars which she brought in, by her earnest labors at fairs, etc., for the building up of the parish works. She died July 1, 1904, and is buried in Mount Calvary Cemetery, near Father Michael and their beloved mother.

The mention of these beloved and honored names brings to mind the many parishioners of St. Peter's, Dorchester, who have passed through the gates of death since the parish was founded in 1872. The thousands who now throng the church on Sundays are types of the thousands who once gathered there with us, but are now beyond the veil, in the safe shelter of the Saviour's love. From the first, sweet, and still unforgotten soul that Father Ronan prepared for death, with all the strengthening Sacraments of the Catholic Church, to the one who died but yesterday, we would find place in our history here, at least in loving thought and prayer. The great Mother-Church, who never forgets her children in life or death, teaches us the consoling doctrine of the Communion of Saints and of prayers for our precious dead, who, we believe, watch us and love us still. For them we offer now the old, familiar petition:—

“Grant them eternal rest, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them!”

## *FATHER RONAN'S SILVER JUBILEE*

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### FATHER RONAN'S SILVER JUBILEE.

In June, 1893, the Silver Jubilee of Father Ronan's ordination to the sacred priesthood was kept by his joyful people. He himself celebrated the Solemn High Mass on that occasion; and his old altar-boys, the Reverends Thomas F. Brannan, Cornelius C. O'Connor and Florence J. Halloran were respectively deacon, sub-deacon, and master of ceremonies. The sermon was delivered by the Reverend Thomas C. McGoldrick, assistant at St. Peter's, and later the pastor and builder of St. Leo's Church, Dorchester.

In the evening the parishioners again assembled, and General Michael T. Donahoe, acting in their behalf, presented the jubilarian with a substantial purse of \$2,400, which, however, he did not apply to his own use, but to that of his parish.

The number of parishioners at this time had grown from the first 1,700 to about 6,000; the Sunday-school, from an attendance of 75 in a blacksmith's shop to 1,100 in the beautiful lower church; and on that morning of the pastor's Jubilee more than 300 children had made their First Communion. Truly, as Father McGoldrick said in his sermon, of the pastor:

"He put his hand to the plough, he scattered the seed, and now a quarter of a century has rolled away, the wilderness has blossomed with beauty, and we have but to lift up our eyes to see the monumental evidences of his fidelity and goodness.

"During all these years he has walked among you like a benediction from God, helping the helpless, befriending the friendless, encouraging the hopeless, lifting up sinners from the darkness of their passions to the light and life of God,



## *A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD*

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and leading saintly souls to higher flights in the realms of virtue."

The Jubilee was marked by the formation of St. Margaret's parish, the first large offshoot of St. Peter's; although a small portion, including the Commercial Point district, had been previously given to St. Ann's parish, Neponset, formed from St. Gregory's parish, Milton, by the Reverend W. H. Fitzpatrick, Father McNulty's successor.

St. Margaret's parish was composed of the north-eastern limits of St. Peter's parish, including the portions lying south of Washington Village and along the line of Dorchester Bay nearly to Savin Hill, and on the west to the burial-ground at Upham's Corner, which contains the stones that, in all New England, bear the oldest dates, although there are graves in Plymouth and elsewhere that are older. The first pastor who was appointed to St. Margaret's was the zealous priest who still ministers ably to its interests, the Reverend William J. Ryan. By a beautiful coincidence the news of his appointment came to him on St. Margaret's Day. Now the name of his mother, as also the name of Father Ronan's mother, was Margaret, so that both of these holy women are thus honored by St. Margaret's parish in a very permanent manner.

In the year 1902 a third portion of St. Peter's parish was given up for the formation of St. Leo's parish, at the western end of Dorchester, beyond Washington Street. The Reverend Thomas C. McGoldrick, assistant for almost eleven years at St. Peter's, was made the first pastor of the new parish and built the beautiful little church; but on April 27, 1904, this gifted young priest was removed by death, and was succeeded by the Reverend Francis J. Butler.

Such was the work done in twenty-five years in St. Peter's





ALTARS AND SHRINES OF LOWER CHURCH.

"And the Lord said to him: I have sanctified this house, which thou hast built, to put My Name there forever, and My eyes and My heart shall be there always."—III Kings 9:3.



## FATHER RONAN'S SILVER JUBILEE

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parish. In the *Dorchester Beacon*, June 27, 1896, occurred the following tribute:—

### “A DORCHESTER PARISH.

“A VIEW OF ST. PETER'S CHURCH BY A DESCENDANT OF THE  
PURITANS.

“Differ as people may in regard to Catholic doctrine and practice, no one can fail to appreciate the massive grandeur of our Catholic church here, the splendid site it occupies, its ivy-mantled walls, its noble entrance, and the serene air of peace and order which surrounds it.

“The church is a building of which any city might be proud. Its peculiar and very remarkable characteristic is this,—that, while the architecture is Gothic, there are no pillars to support the vaulted roof, and the view is unobstructed from end to end. The altars of marble and onyx are singularly beautiful, and the organ and gallery are perhaps unsurpassed by any church of the size in Boston.

“Through the high roof of the interior, exquisitely finished in cherry and picked out in gold, is a series of frescoes done by an artist lying on his back on a dizzy scaffolding. Lower down, on the one side, are scenes from the Old Testament, and on the other side from the New Testament. Angels support the cornices in nave and sanctuary, seventy-two lovely figures, some bearing a shield with the crossed keys of Saint Peter. It is not only St. Peter's Church, but the Church of the Holy Scriptures, and of the Holy Angels, too.

“Around the walls, between the beautifully stained windows, are the ‘Stations of the Way of the Cross,’ fire-proof, and done by workmen near Oberammergau. These stations, or pictures, representing the passion and death of the Redeemer

## *A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD*

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of man, are singularly devotional in their character. The magnificent brass sanctuary lamp, with its seven lights, is the gift of the pastor.

“When the church was finished, a suitable parochial residence was built of brick, perfectly free from tawdry ornamentation or fanciful style of architecture, a fitting complement to the church, massive, beautiful, and religious in character. And around the whole church property breathes an air of serene loveliness, of order and peace, reminding one of the words, ‘the beauty of holiness.’ Church and house are free from debt.

“In October, 1897, the parish will attain its Silver Jubilee, or twenty-fifth year of existence among us,—an event which should interest all Dorchester, as well as her Catholic citizens; for St. Peter’s stands now in the front rank of our churches, and its pastor has proved himself one of the most public-spirited men among us. He has not only adorned Dorchester with her most beautiful and conspicuous building, and made the surroundings lovely forever, but he was among the first to further the scheme for the park and fountain on Eaton Square, and at its dedication he first showed his talent as a ready and witty public speaker,—a talent which, at the Archbishop’s Jubilee, reached a very marked degree of merit and eloquence. He is interested and intelligent in regard to the political welfare of his country, and alive to the stirring questions of the day. As a financier, he stands in the foremost ranks for his prudence and care of the funds intrusted to him, and he has done his work with a quiet and wise earnestness,—so quiet and wise as almost to escape proper observation.

“He has walked among us for almost twenty-five years of a blameless priesthood, and has borne patiently a heavy load of care with no complaint. His fellow-citizens have learned to

## *FATHER RONAN'S SILVER JUBILEE*

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honor him and count his well-known face and kindly smile a benediction. And yet it may be a surprise for most of us to learn that he now ranks senior of all the pastors in Dorchester, though, when we learn it, we can only feel the deeper reverence for him. For few of us can deny that, when he came here, ours was a town of singularly hard Protestant prejudice, and that in the years he has labored here he has done more than men had deemed possible, and more than any other one man has done, to wipe out prejudice and to remove difference and ill-feeling by the manifest peace and holiness of his daily life and the even tenor of his ways. And he has made the wilderness blossom as the rose, not only on the hard rocks of Mount Ida, but in the souls he has led onward in the service of God and in charity toward each other.

“Catholics and Protestants alike join in the wish that he may see his golden jubilee among us. His people should be proud of such a pastor and the town of such a citizen. To write his real history and that of his parish would require a volume, and would be such a surprising record of earnest work, self-sacrifice, and prayer, as would make us all exclaim: ‘God bless the parish, the pastor, the people! Peace be in thy walls, and plenteousness in thy strong places!’”

## *A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD*

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### A TWOFOLD TASK.

In the year 1896 Father Ronan faced another task of very great importance,—the erection of his parish school; and he also determined to build at the same time, at the far north end of the parish, a mission church, St. Paul's, Woodward Park Street. The need of both these undertakings may be judged from the fact that in twenty-five years over 1,500 couples had been married at St. Peter's and 7,000 children baptized.

This task was, indeed, a strenuous endeavor, for he built, as usual with him, on far-seeing plans; the school was to accommodate 1,000 children, and the church was to seat 1,100 persons. Moreover, the work went on during one of the hottest summers on record, and Father Ronan superintended the workers in both places, going cheerfully from one building to another, day by day. As he had watched every stone that had gone into St. Peter's Church, so he watched every brick that went into the school; from eight in the morning until five at night, except when at St. Paul's, he was on the ascending walls with the men. His placid, patient, uncomplaining nature kept his people from sufficiently perceiving the strain upon their pastor's health and strength. He went on steadily until St. Paul's Church was finished. The first Mass was said there on Christmas Day, 1896, by the pastor.

The Church of St. Paul has a frontage on Woodward Park Street of 70 feet, and is 125 feet in depth. A vestibule 8 feet wide leads into the church proper, which is, exclusive of the sanctuary, 65 by 85 feet. The sanctuary itself, recessed for the altar, is 20 by 46 feet. Adjoining the altar on either side are the two sacristies, each 18 by 18 feet. The church is finished



## *A TWOFOLD TASK*

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30 feet high, with the ceiling moulded at the joining of the side walls. Over the vestibule in the rear is the organ gallery, 15 feet by 40.

The interior finish is of hard pine, and the walls and ceiling are frescoed in soft colors to harmonize with the stained glass and woodwork. The sanctuary arch and walls are tinted a terra-cotta color, relieved by a mosaic cross in gold leaf.

The building is thoroughly ventilated, and is heated by steam.

On New Year's Day, 1908, St. Paul's mission became a separate parish, and was handed over to its new pastor, the present Auxiliary Bishop of Boston, Right Reverend Joseph G. Anderson, Vicar-General, free from debt, and not only free from debt, but particularly well equipped.

St. Peter's School was finished in 1898. It is a three-story brick building, entered through a triple-arched porch with pilasters in the Ionic order and an entablature and balustrade to conform. This entrance leads to a corridor, the full length of the building, at the extremities of which are side entrances for the boys and girls respectively, and iron stairs leading to the floors above, and to the basement. The building contains fifteen class-rooms and an assembly hall sufficiently large for all school purposes. The ground floor contains the recreation rooms for the children, the toilets, and boiler-room. On the first floor, besides the class-rooms, are reception-rooms and a room for the Sister Superior in charge. The assembly hall occupies the central portion of the building above the second floor, and is about twenty-five feet high, with side and rear galleries and boxes. The stage with its accessories is complete. The hall is beautifully decorated, the walls being delicately tinted, and the ceiling finished with deep, ornamented panels. The proscenium arch is designed in the composite order with

## *A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD*

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pilasters, cornice, and entablature, the upper mouldings of which become part of the cornice of the main hall, and this forms a finish for the panelled ceiling. The faces and sides of the pilasters are panelled and decorated with arabesque ornaments. The building is heated by direct-indirect steam, and is ventilated by the gravity system. The architect of this fine building, as of St. Paul's Church, St. Peter's Convent, and the new St. Mary's Infant Asylum, is Mr. W. H. McGinty of Boston. A thoughtful visitor to the school, estimating the cost of the building and the yearly expense of educating nearly a thousand children therein, will be struck by the great saving to the city, and will be impressed by the depth of the religious conviction which carries cheerfully so heavy a financial burden.

Since this volume was begun, a new parish called St. William's, consisting of territory south of St. Margaret's nearly to Glover's Corner, and including the Savin Hill district, has been cut off from St. Peter's, thus making five parishes of which St. Peter's is the parent stock. The Reverend James McCarthy is the pastor of St. William's. Seventeen priests now labor in the wide field where once Father Ronan toiled alone.

## VISIT TO THE HOLY LAND

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### FATHER RONAN'S VISIT TO ROME AND THE HOLY LAND.

Father Ronan had indeed earned, and he much needed, a decided rest and change after his strenuous and long-continued labors. Early in 1898 Archbishop Williams granted him a vacation of four months. He took advantage of this permission to gratify a wish that every priest must feel,—to visit those places in the Holy Land “where walked those blessed feet once nailed for our advantage to the bitter cross”; and to go to Rome and kneel at the feet of the Vicar of Christ. These privileges were greatly valued by Father Ronan, and have been a source of continual delight to him. On his return a reception was tendered him by his parishioners, June 19, 1898, and Mr. Bernard Corr presented to him, from his rejoicing people, a purse of \$2,600, which was given by Father Ronan to clear the debt then remaining on the school.

We question whether he saw many places abroad that seemed to him more lovely than the ivy-mantled walls of his splendid church, the emerald lawn and terraced banks, the leafy trees, the placid tranquillity of all the place,—a scene that had inspired the lines printed on the evening's program:—

“Glorious St. Peter's! tower of strength, and founded  
On solid bases of eternal stone!  
By delicate green of clambering vines surrounded,  
Beauty of holiness, and God's alone!  
Welcome to-night, from Bethlehem and from Rome,  
The strong, true heart that gave thee here thy home!”

From the account of his travels given by Father Ronan on this occasion, we make the following extracts:

## *A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD*

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“We left the city of New York February 5, in the steamer ‘Aller,’ North German Lloyd Company. It was a special cruise, and the three hundred and forty-eight passengers in a short time were like a genial and united family. Three days out of New York, we reached a warm and pleasant climate, and soon came in sight of the beautiful Azores, belonging to Portugal. These islands are under a high state of cultivation, for the people are very industrious. The island of Pico, one of the group, was particularly interesting. With its almost perpendicular slope rising seven thousand feet from the sea, it stands like a sentinel guarding the entrance to Europe.

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“After spending four days in Cairo, we took a steamer from Alexandria to Palestine, where we landed at Jaffa without difficulty, although it is a dangerous port, having no harbor but the open sea. Jaffa is a pleasing city of about twenty thousand people. Our objective point was the home of Simon, the tanner. There we went into St. Peter’s room, and also up to the roof where he received the famous vision. It was at Jaffa that he raised the dead woman to life. From Jaffa we passed through the beautiful valley of Sharon, with its extensive and silver-colored olive groves, and we climbed the lofty hills of Judea to Jerusalem. Each one of us wanted to be the first to see this holy city, yet we had almost reached it before any one of us knew it was the city. At the sight of the sign ‘Jerusalem’ above the railway station, a strange and most peculiar feeling came over me. There is only one city of Jerusalem!

“I lodged at a monastery which is in charge of the Franciscan monks. The widest streets seemed to me not over twenty feet. Jerusalem is, alas! a very unclean city, and poverty is



## *VISIT TO THE HOLY LAND*

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visible on all sides; but we need not wonder at this, for the Turk rules there, and, wherever the Turk plants his foot, he seems to bring a curse on the place.

“We first visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which is an object of most special interest. There we saw the tomb where our blessed Lord was laid, and over that hallowed tomb I had the unspeakable privilege of saying Mass. I cannot tell you how I felt. Such feelings I never had before, and perhaps may never have again. Close beside that tomb there is a stone, said to be the identical slab where our Saviour’s Body rested while loving hands anointed it for burial. I think all present, regardless of belief, kissed that stone with love and reverence. I also said Mass on Mount Calvary, and visited the little chapel of Saint Helena, built on the spot where the true Cross was found.

“Next in interest is the Mosque of Omar, built on the site of Solomon’s Temple. There the Saviour preached to the people; there His Mother found Him after the three days’ absence; there, too, took place the Presentation of our Lord.

“We visited Bethany, and stood in the building where, tradition says, Mary and Martha lived. Close by is the tomb of Lazarus. Then we went to Bethlehem, and I had the great happiness of saying Mass on the ‘Altar of the Manger’ in the place where our Redeemer was born. We saw the hills where the shepherds watched their flocks, and the house where Saint Joseph is said to have lived before he was espoused to the Blessed Virgin.

“At last we reached the city of Nazareth. I thought it the most beautiful city in all Palestine. It is built like an amphitheatre on a sloping hill. The streets are comparatively clean and well kept. In this city was our Saviour’s home from His twelfth to His thirtieth year, as Scripture tells us. I said Mass in the chapel built over the traditional site of the house where

## *A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD*

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He worked with His foster-father at the carpenter's trade. Tradition points out the spot where the Angel Gabriel appeared to the Blessed Virgin.

“Near Tiberias we saw the tomb of Jonas the Prophet, and then we visited the town of Cana, in Galilee, where our Lord changed the water into wine. The Valley of Esdraelon is most fertile and beautiful. Leaving it, we came to the Mountain of Beatitudes, where our Lord delivered the famous ‘Sermon on the Mount’; and, further down, we saw the place where He multiplied the loaves and fishes. Beyond this place are the plains of Hattin, where was fought the last and fatal battle between the Mussulmans and the Crusaders. On the right are the hills of Gilboa. Very wonderful were the events that transpired in this neighborhood. Here King Saul met his death; here the soldiers of Gideon lapped up the water; here, too, wicked Jezebel fell from her window, and was devoured by dogs. Near by is Tabor, the Mountain of the Transfiguration, the most beautiful mountain, and one of the highest, in all Palestine. On the top is a monastery. We also saw the little town of Naim, where Christ raised the widow's son to life.

“From the highest part of this mountain district we saw the pretty town of Tiberias and the Sea of Galilee, which seemed to me the most beautiful lake I had ever beheld. It is surrounded by hills on every side. Taking a boat, we sailed on these waters, whence our Lord preached to the multitude, and on whose surface Saint Peter walked at the Master's bidding. We saw the site of the ancient town of Capharnaum, the place where Saint Peter and Saint Andrew were born; and Magdala where Saint Mary Magdalen was born. Think of what it was to me to see the birthplace of Saint Peter, the Patron Saint of our church!

## VISIT TO THE HOLY LAND

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“Proceeding on our journey, we came to the Dead Sea. It is the lowest depression on the earth’s surface, being seventeen hundred feet lower than the Mediterranean. Any one afraid to swim need have no fears here. You cannot sink. It is a beautiful body of water, and has a peculiar density that no other known body of water possesses. We walked along by the Jordan, and saw the spot where tradition says that our Saviour was baptized by Saint John.

“At night we reached Jericho, and returned next day to Jerusalem. We rode on donkeys around the city, went up to the Mount of Olives, and viewed the place whence our Lord ascended into heaven. There a feeling of great sadness came upon me, for over this hallowed spot is a miserable little mosque, the walls of which are covered with pencil scribblings. I thought to myself: If this spot were in Boston, we would build over it a most magnificent temple.

“From Jerusalem we took the train to Jaffa, where a storm delayed us for three days, after which we proceeded by boat to Haifa, at the very eastern end of the Mediterranean, and slept that night on Mount Carmel, whence I sent pressed flowers to our Boston Carmelites. Next day we bade farewell to Palestine. I shall never forget the feelings that I had as I walked along the beach that day at Haifa, picking up the pebbles at the extreme easterly end of the Mediterranean and thinking of the holy places I had been permitted to see.

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“There is no city like Rome, on account of its ancient and modern memories. St. Peter’s is the largest and finest church in the world. I have seen most of the best cathedrals in Europe, and I will say that St. Peter’s is easily the grandest of all. It covers two hundred and forty thousand square feet, it took one



## *A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD*

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hundred and seventy-six years to build, and it cost over sixty million dollars. It is six hundred and ninety-six feet long, or about four and one-half times as long as our own St. Peter's, and its width at the transept is four hundred and fifty feet. The dome, a masterpiece planned by the great brain of Michael Angelo, is the grandest in the world. The cross on this dome is four hundred and seventy feet above the street. The diameter of the dome is one hundred and forty-one feet, or about fifteen feet less than the length of our church.

"We had the great privilege of twice seeing the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII. This privilege was secured for us through the kindness of the Right Reverend Monsignor William H. O'Connell, D.D., president of the American College. First I saw Pope Leo celebrate Mass. Afterwards he made his thanksgiving while another Mass was being said, and then he went away to take a little nourishment, though I think he was not gone more than three minutes. Returning, he sat down, and received a deputation of one hundred and eighty Hungarian pilgrims. He listened to their address, made an admirable reply, and then blessed each pilgrim one by one. All this took a long time, for he began Mass at eight o'clock and finished the audience at 10.30, and I had the great happiness of being near him and watching him all the time. His physician stands where he can observe him closely, and warn him to discontinue should he give any sign of faintness. The Holy Father is very thin and frail in his appearance. His lips seem bloodless, and his hands and face are like those of a white marble statue. In fact, the whole man is like an alabaster figure.

"Some days later we were received by him in a private audience in his own apartments. We were fourteen American priests, and he was evidently deeply interested in us. I

## *VISIT TO THE HOLY LAND*

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knelt close to him, where I could look straight into his face. He spoke at length with us, and blessed us; and he gave to us the right to extend his blessing to the members of our congregations,—which blessing I hope to impart to you at an early date.

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“Sailing from Southampton, I reached home in safety, feeling able and glad to take up parish work once more. We made our long journey of twenty thousand miles in four months and a half, without once taking a wrong train or having a serious mishap, and I think this must be due to some good prayers offered by my people for their absent pastor.

“It is pleasant to travel, to go abroad, and to see other sections of the world; but I wish to emphasize the saying that ‘there is no place like home,’ and especially when the home is in Dorchester.”

## A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD

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### HISTORY OF ST. PETER'S SCHOOL.

St. Peter's Parish School was opened September 19, 1898. The serious question, what religious order of teachers should be chosen, had been considered, and, finally, Father Ronan had determined on the Sisters of Charity from Halifax, who teach in the public schools there, and who had already a school in our neighboring parish of St. Patrick's, Roxbury, and an academy at Wellesley, Massachusetts. Seven Sisters, with Mother M. Bernard as their Superior, came from Mount St. Vincent, Halifax, Nova Scotia, September 14. They found a temporary home ready for them in the old Percival Cottage behind the church; and it became truly a home to them when, on the first Friday of the following November, Father Ronan brought the Blessed Sacrament to the little chapel, to be its abiding Guest.

The school opened with 286 pupils, boys and girls, in six primary classes. The Sisters found a strong prejudice existing against parish schools; and for a time they and their methods were closely observed by the parents and other visitors. Gradually, however, the feeling of prejudice wore off, and, when the first exhibition of school work was held in May, 1899, general satisfaction was manifested. The total number of children registered in all the classes in the first year was 286. The numbers in the following years were as follows:—

1899-1900 . . . . .	380
1900-1901 . . . . .	535
1901-1902 . . . . .	607
1902-1903 . . . . .	702
1903-1904 . . . . .	767
1904-1905 . . . . .	864
1905-1906 . . . . .	870
1906-1907 . . . . .	834
1907-1908 . . . . .	920

## *ST. PETER'S SCHOOL AND CONVENT*

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The first graduation occurred in 1904, when diplomas were given to fourteen children; eighteen graduated in 1905; thirty-four in 1906; thirty-six in 1907; and sixty-six in 1908.

At the fifth annual graduation exercises, June 23, 1908, twenty-two girls and twelve boys graduated from the ninth grade, and twenty-one girls and eleven boys from the eighth grade. Every year, a considerable percentage of the graduates receive, besides the regular school diplomas, diocesan certificates, which are given only to those children who receive 85 per cent. or more in the diocesan examinations.

The teaching in this school is of a very high order, and the parents are immensely pleased with the results their children show.

There is, too, a peculiar refinement which one perceives in the children as the effect not alone of their training, but of the daily example of the Sisters' own manners and holy lives which are a true type of the beauty of holiness and an exemplification of the saying that "the highest sanctity and the highest good breeding are akin." To their fine educational work is ever joined the thought of God. Religion is the keynote of their daily teaching. Each hour in school begins with the recitation of a little prayer. The children learn that which is necessary for their future temporal well-being and still more for their eternal and spiritual welfare.

Shortly after the arrival of the Sisters, the girls' Sunday-school, numbering then about 700, was placed under their care, while the Sunday-school for boys remained under the direction of the Rev. F. J. Halloran.

The Sisters strive to infuse an earnest spirit of active charity and helpfulness among those whom they educate or influence. The utter devotion with which they give themselves to the



## *A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD*

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development of the children's minds and characters, as well as their many ministries of goodness to the poor, the sick, and the afflicted, have won the hearts of the people, who look upon them now as indeed a component and very treasured part of the parish, influencing souls to work for God's honor and glory, as well as educating the young in the learning necessary for their future sphere of life and action.

On September 21, 1905, the first sod was turned on the site of the new convent, and in the autumn of 1906 the building, a splendid structure, with accommodations for forty Sisters, was finished. This was Father Ronan's crowning work, watched over with the same minute care as all the rest of his work, and completed at a cost that speaks volumes for his prudent management of church affairs and of his people's money. That such a building could be erected for the sum he spent on it, \$37,000, is simply amazing. Day by day the pastor himself climbed to superintend the construction. So he supervised all his work for the glory of God, his Master.

St. Peter's Convent fronts on Bowdoin Street at the corner of Mt. Ida Road. It is a brick building, four stories above the basement, with ample accommodation for the Sisters who teach the children of the parish. Like St. Peter's Rectory and St. Peter's School, the exterior of the building is of common face red brick, water struck. The underpinning, water table, belts, sills, caps, and keystones are granite, and the cornice is terra-cotta.

The interior arrangement is that of rooms separated by a corridor running the full length of the building, with stairs at either end. The principal entrance is in the centre of the building facing Bowdoin Street, where curved granite steps and buttresses lead to a porch in the Tuscan order. From the side porches at either end, entrance may be had either to the first

## *ST. PETER'S SCHOOL AND CONVENT*

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floor, on which are located the parlors, offices, and chapel, or to the ground floor, where are the kitchen, dining-room, laundry, and other necessary working apartments. Above the first floor are the Sisters' private rooms, one for each Sister, and a spacious infirmary.

On the roof of the building is a splendid garden where the Sisters may look out on Dorchester Bay and inhale the invigorating sea breezes for which Dorchester is noted. The beautiful chapel, which forms for the Sisters the very centre of their home, is on the first floor, and is connected with the large community-room by folding doors. In the tabernacle of the lovely altar abides their Divine Spouse and Eucharistic Lord; and in His real and constant Presence with them the Sisters find the Living Source of the noble strength and serene peace that mark their daily lives.

The importance of a pleasant, comfortable, and religious home for the Sisters, who do so much for the moral and intellectual development of the children, can easily be understood; and its beneficent influence upon future generations will always reflect credit on the wisdom which provided for its erection.

In 1903 Archbishop Williams had appointed Father Ronan a member of his council, and in 1906 he made him the Permanent Rector of St. Peter's Parish.



ST. MARY'S INFANT ASYLUM, DORCHESTER.

There is a unique feature in Father Ronan's career which calls for our special and careful attention, and that is his very long, arduous, and devoted work for St. Mary's Infant Asylum, which was placed by Bishop Williams in the parish of St. Peter's, Dorchester, in the very year of its formation, 1872. So great is the influence that Father Ronan has exerted upon the spiritual and temporal welfare of this institution that the self-sacrificing, faithful Sisters of Charity, who have it in charge, have come to regard him as their Saint Vincent de Paul, and to call him by that venerated name. He has borne for this work the burden and the heat of the day, and so quietly, unostentatiously, and smilingly that few realize what a heavy though holy task it has been. As to his unknown labors, no one but God, and the Sisters of Charity who struggled hard to sustain the charity, know the goodness of their spiritual adviser; on many an occasion, when those poor Sisters knew not where to find food for the little ones placed in their charge, Father Ronan would come to their assistance.

To the constant example of reverence in St. Peter's Church and to the presence there of the "White Bonnet" Sisters in our early days, when we were all like one family as it were, the parish owes much. The Sisters at that time helped with the altar-work on great feasts; they visited the sick in the parish; they were friends, consolers, and advisers. The beloved and well-remembered name and the very great kindness of Sister Mary Teresa Cain, later at the head of the Infant Asylum in South San Francisco, California, should not be omitted here.

## *ST. MARY'S INFANT ASYLUM*

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And the remembrance of Father Ronan's first Mass in the chapel of the Sisters of Charity, after his ordination in Troy, is linked with all his work for St. Mary's in the after-years. But the additional burden, thus placed early on the young pastor's shoulders, was no slight one. In itself this special form of charity is a peculiarly difficult one, while it is also allied in a very intimate way to the Great Shepherd of souls and the Divine Lover of little children, Who Himself once was a little child. Only too frequently misunderstood, however, is this Christ-like ministering to the most helpless of Christ's flock. While it is not a parish charity, it is, nevertheless, in Father Ronan's special pastoral field, so that the administering of the sacraments in sick calls, baptisms, confessions, etc., fell at once to his share, and was a great added care, while it brought to him blessings a hundred-fold.

St. Mary's Infant Asylum was first started on the old Seaver estate at the corner of Homes Avenue and Bowdoin Street, Dorchester. Under the auspices of Bishop Williams, the Rev. James Healy, afterwards Bishop of Portland, and other Boston clergymen and laymen met in its behalf; and at that first meeting Father Ronan, the new parish priest, was present. The house first bought was extremely inconvenient, and devoid of appliances now considered essential; yet in the Maternity Department not one death occurred during the years the charity was carried on in that place. This fact was justly considered so remarkable that the well-known physician, Dr. Benjamin Cushing of Dorchester, the loyal and untiring friend of St. Mary's Infant Asylum from its beginning until his death in 1895, reported with pride to the Medical Society of Boston the wonderful results of the Sisters' care.

In 1883 the work was removed to Jones's Hill at Upham's

## *A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD*

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Corner, where the Green estate had been purchased and the house had been renovated for use. To this building another, costing about \$28,000, was added in 1884. For a while the charity passed into the hands of another community of Sisters, and various experiments were tried by the diocese of Boston to carry on the work with success, yet all failed. Finally, when affairs had reached a very low ebb, Father Ronan stepped into the breach with intense personal endeavor; and then, not only as pastor, but as builder, planner, supervisor, treasurer, he became the good angel of the place. In 1901 another new building was put up, and Father Ronan went himself to New Hampshire to choose the brick, and then supervised the work as in the case of his own parish structures. Much of the money for the erection of this magnificent asylum was obtained by Father Ronan himself, from charitable business and professional men of Boston, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, to whom he went personally, to explain the mission and the needs of St. Mary's. He begged for it with tireless energy, exemplary humility, and real self-abnegation. The building cost about \$45,000, and of this amount \$10,000 was collected by Father Ronan. His plan, successfully carried out, was to collect from 100 persons \$100 each, and in this way he raised a sum of \$10,000. When the building was completed, he paid off, personally, from his own money, a floating debt of \$2,200.

Only a priest such as Father Ronan proved himself to be would have battled on, untiringly, regardless of the rebuffs heaped upon him by many unsympathetic people to whom he appealed for aid.

Father Ronan says, with thankfulness to God, that he has many souls praying in heaven for him, who have been baptized at St. Mary's Infant Asylum. The number of children

## *ST. MARY'S INFANT ASYLUM*

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received into the institution since its foundation is 17,332; and the number born there averages 200 yearly. Father Ronan has had the pleasure of seeing a "Ladies' Diocesan Association," in connection with this charity, grow into useful and systematic importance on his own steady and quiet lines. The energetic administration of Sister Mary Joseph is gratefully remembered by the Asylum's friends; and Sister Euphemia, late Superior at St. Mary's for ten years, deserves our mention now for her long, arduous, patient work of prayerful love.

The Maternity Department consists of the old house remodelled, that was on the lot when purchased, and an addition of a four-story brick building, 40 by 80 feet, used for hospital purposes. This department had its origin in a small ward in Carney Hospital, known as St. Ann's Ward. Taken up at St. Mary's in conjunction with the care of infants in the same building, frequently with the same attendants, and under other trying and unavoidable difficulties, the results were excellent. But the erection and completion of the new building and its occupancy by the infants left the Maternity Hospital more space for expansion and more opportunity for progressive adjustment to modern theories of hospital conduct. As the advent of the germ theory in medicine and surgery and the dawn of the antiseptic period influenced hospital construction, conduct, and discipline, the Maternity Hospital, under the wise direction of Father Ronan, immediately adapted itself, in construction, arrangement, and equipment, to modern scientific thought, and further increased its efficiency by the establishment of a training-school for nurses. During the past ten years the results, from an obstetrical and surgical point of view, have been equal to any hospital of similar size in this country. In view of these results the benefits of this well-equipped insti-



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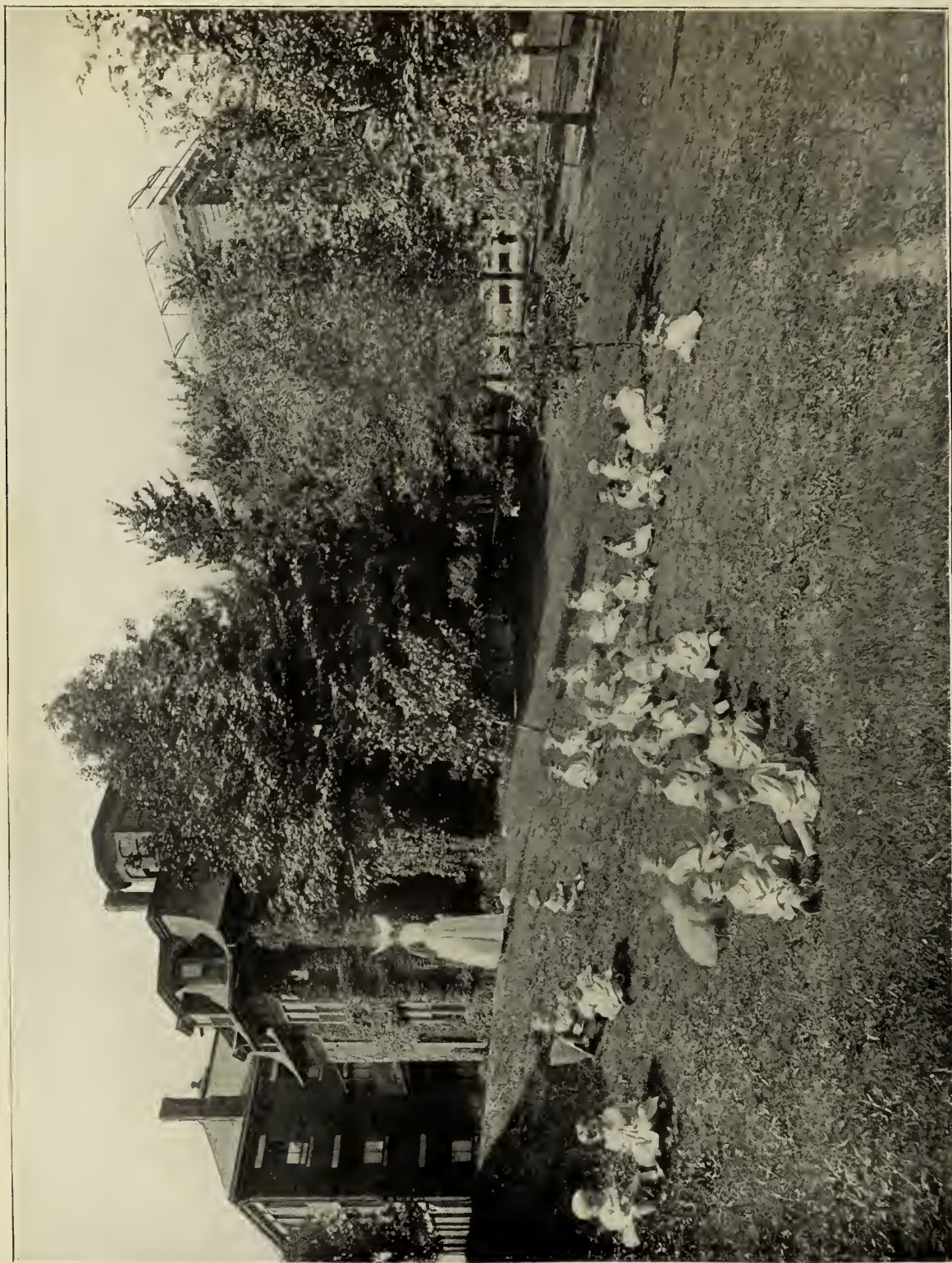
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tution were extended to the public, which has availed itself of it to such an extent that the separate department created is already inadequate. In the midst of this material advancement and progress, the main objects of this great reconstructive charity have never been obscured, including, as it does, the interests of two individuals, the mother and the child. In a religious atmosphere and under the guidance of the Sisters of Charity, the spiritual and social uplift of the one is accomplished, and the spiritual life of the other is assured.

The children's building is a rectangular structure measuring 50 feet wide and 100 feet long, five stories in height. In addition to the main building, a heating, ventilating, and laundry plant, 35 feet by 70, one story high, connects the children's building with the maternity department. The exterior of the children's building is after the best models in brick of the Georgian period, of common face, water struck brick with limestone trimmings. The principal entrance is in the centre of the longitudinal façade, but there are also entrances facing Jerome Street and Cushing Avenue. Each entrance is sheltered by a covered porch. Opposite the central entrance is the main stairway, which begins in the basement and terminates at the roof. A corridor, ten feet wide, the full length of the building, on each floor, connects this stairway with the fireproof stairs erected between brick walls at one extremity of the building and the exterior stairway of iron leading from balconies on each floor at the opposite ends of the building. The central stairway separates the building into two distinct parts, the portion on the right to be used exclusively during the day, and the portion on the left for night use. The ground floor is used for examinations, detention-rooms, quarantine-rooms, mortuary, pathological rooms, laboratory, toilet-rooms, and







ST. MARY'S INFANT ASYLUM AND MATERNITY HOSPITAL, DORCHESTER.

Under Father Ronan's Spiritual Care since 1872.

"He that shall receive one such little child in My Name, receiveth Me."—ST. MATTHEW 18: 5.

## *ST. MARY'S INFANT ASYLUM*

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offices. The children are divided into three classes; so the first floor is reserved solely for "runabouts," the second floor for "creepers," and the third floor for infants. The dormitory for the nurses is on the upper floor of the building, while the roof is converted into a delightful roof-garden. Each floor contains nurseries, dormitories, diet kitchen, laboratory, toilet-rooms, nurses' apartments, etc. Every department that is to be used for the children has a system of direct-indirect ventilation in addition to open fireplaces.

Recently the sum of \$19,000 accrued to the Infant Asylum from the will of the late Miss Florence Lyman, a convert to the Catholic Faith, and daughter of the Hon. Theodore Lyman, mayor of Boston 1834, 1835, in whose memory the fountain on Eaton Square, opposite St. Peter's Church, was given by the city. At the dedication, Father Ronan made an admirable address. \$8,000 came to the Asylum through the thoughtfulness of Thomas F. Reddy, Esq., executor of the estate of Mr. J. J. Finnegan of South Boston, who left to his judgment the disposal of the residue of his property.

By vote of the Corporation, sun parlors, three stories in height, built of steel and glass, have, this year, been added to the institution; and a magnificent new maternity hospital, to be called St. Margaret's, is in process of erection under Father Ronan's supervision.



## *A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD*

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### ST. PETER'S PARISH LIFE.

Father Ronan would be quick to say that his great work has not been done without constant help from his assistants, Fathers Chittick, Glennon, Sullivan, McGoldrick, Geary, Buckley, Hickey, Crayton and Maguire, and the present devoted staff, Fathers Halloran, Kenney, Blunt, and Derby, who, by their kindness and attention to duty and their readiness at all times to serve the interests of the people, have won not only their respect but their gratitude and affection.

The life of every parish is centred in and radiates from the tabernacle; and one may judge the spiritual condition of a people by asking how many of them receive Holy Communion frequently. What most impresses the observant visitor at St. Peter's is the throng of people who, independently of the Sodalties, approach the Holy Table every Sunday.

The number of Holy Communions at St. Peter's is estimated at about 75,000 yearly. Rarely during the day is the Eucharistic Lord without the company of some devout worshipper, while troops of children stop for an act of love on their way to and from school, and their elders, in the quiet evening hours, come in numbers to find rest and strength at the feet of Him Who alone can give it.

The beautiful devotion of the Holy Hour takes place in the evening of the third Friday of each month. On Sundays there are eight Masses, one at 6.30 downstairs and one at 7.30 upstairs; two at nine; High Mass and a sermon upstairs at ten, and a low Mass downstairs at the same hour; and two low Masses at 11.15. Vespers and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, with recitation of the Holy Rosary, come at 3.30 P.M.

## *ST. PETER'S PARISH LIFE*

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The religious societies that are usually found in a large and well-organized parish flourish in St. Peter's. The children are taken care of, from their First Communion day, in the Sodality for boys and in the Holy Angels' Sodality for girls. The latter is in charge of the Sisters. The boys and girls of school age have their respective monthly Communion days, and it is one of the hopeful promises for the future that these children, aggregating more than six hundred, reverently and frequently draw near the Source of Purity and Holiness.

The Junior Holy Name Society is intended for working boys and for youth of more mature age who are still in school. The Holy Name Society is the general organization for the men of the parish. This society numbers 550 active members. In the great parade connected with the celebration of the Centenary of the diocese, Nov. 1, 1908, St. Peter's Holy Name Society, by general judgment, was without a superior. The Reverend Hugh F. Blunt is director of this society.

The girls pass out of the Holy Angels' Sodality into that of the Children of Mary, and thus, under different divisions, remain under the influence of the Sisters until they enter young womanhood. The Children of Mary is a successful society, with a beautiful consecration in May to which the children look forward. This society has a library of some 600 volumes that appeal to girls, and a bureau of charitable work taking practical care of poor children at Christmas-tide.

The Young Ladies' Sodality is one of the veteran organizations of the parish. In the early days those who belonged to it did splendid work for the upbuilding of the church, and it continues to draw to its ranks many of the most earnest souls and the most practical and reliable workers in the parish. This Sodality is in the care of the Reverend Edward Kenney.



## *A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD*

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The Married Ladies' Sodality, numbering 600, and for the past ten years in charge of the Sisters, is a most cohesive body, representing the best family life of the parish, instinct with Christian sentiment, and actively supporting every parish interest.

The League of the Sacred Heart is the society in which all the parishioners may meet to advance the reign of Christ. St. Peter's has one of the most successful branches of the League in the diocese, the First Friday Communions aggregating, generally, a thousand. Connected with the League is the parish branch of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. These societies are under the direction of Reverend Michael J. Derby.

Stephen Hart, who served Father Ronan's first Mass in Lyceum Hall, and who was valedictorian in the first class to be graduated from Boston College; may be considered the first-fruits of the children of the parish who were to be separated to the service of God. With the laurels of academic honors fresh upon him, he died on the eve of his anticipated entrance into the Seminary.

Three of the Lyceum Hall altar-boys, however, reached the dignity of the priesthood. Of these, the Reverend Edward Clexton was the first to be ordained. He was a member of the first class to be sent out from St. John's Seminary in Brighton. After a brief curacy in Plymouth, he was transferred to St. Augustine's, South Boston, where for ten years he spent himself in fruitful labors. In the full vigor of his powers he was called to his eternal reward in 1897.

The second was the Reverend Thomas F. Brannan, ordained in 1889, and for many years an assiduous and successful assistant in the Gate of Heaven parish, South Boston. He is now pastor of Holbrook. The third of the trio was

## *ST. PETER'S PARISH LIFE*

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the lamented Reverend Cornelius O'Connor, who, beloved by the priesthood of the diocese as well as by the people of St. Vincent's parish, South Boston, among whom he labored, died in the third year of his ministry.

Two altar-boys, of a somewhat later date, and cousins, became priests: the Reverend F. J. Halloran, ordained in the parish church, September 26, 1893, by the Right Reverend John Brady, D.D., auxiliary Bishop of Boston, and the saintly young Redemptorist, the Reverend James J. Brick, who died June 8, 1900, at Saratoga, N.Y.

Two brothers, grandsons of Mrs. Johnston of the Lyceum Hall time, the Reverends William J. Cartwright, C.S.P., and Richard S. Cartwright, C.S.P., joined the Paulist community after giving devoted service to St. Peter's parish in their younger days. The Reverend Thomas Ryder, whose parents were zealous workers for St. Peter's, is also a Paulist. The Reverend John Cronan was born in St. Peter's parish, and was baptized by Father Ronan. Connected with the parish as students were the Reverends Michael J. Derby, John and Francis Dinan, S.J., Augustine D. Malley, Daniel Sheerin, F. X. Mahoney, Joseph Murphy, Lawrence V. Broughall, C.S.C., John Coveney, S.J., and James Newcome. The Nixon family have given a son to the Xavierian Brothers.

Mary Hennessey, a member of the first Communion class of St. Peter's, became a Dominican in "the Congregation of Reparation of St. Catherine," the motherhouse being in Albany, N.Y., and she is now filling her second three years' term of office as Reverend Mother Prioress and Vicarress. Mrs. Johnston's grand-daughter, Genevieve Cartwright, who recited her catechism as a child at Father Ronan's knee in the old Percival Cottage, is now Sister M. Eucharist, novice-mis-

## *A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD*

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tress in the same Order of Charity that has charge of St. Peter's School. The parish is also represented in the Orders of the Sacred Heart, the Good Shepherd, the Notre Dame, Franciscans, Dominicans, the Mercy Order, "White Bonnet" Sisters of Charity as at the Infant Asylum, the Little Sisters of the Poor, and the Sisters of St. Joseph.

In the parish a constant service of charity has gone on among the laity. In 1884 the Conference of St. Vincent de Paul was established by a band of earnest men, who for these many years have labored without salary for God's poor in Dorchester, meeting on Monday evenings for intercessory prayer and for consultation, and going about during the week, after their day's toil, to minister to their poorer brethren in Christ's name. The good they have accomplished in this way cannot be computed by "red-tape" methods. Theirs is a great work of mercy to the souls as well as to the bodies of the needy; and they who do the work know that their own souls are benefited thereby. St. Peter's Conference has always had the reputation of being in the forefront of successful labor for the poor. Father Ronan was its first spiritual director.

The Frederic Ozanam House is a Parish Institute, founded by Father Halloran with Father Ronan's encouragement, which aims to help toward the realization of the ideal of the Catholic parish,—one great family whose head is Jesus Christ. In pursuance of this purpose it affords instruction and help, both spiritual and temporal, to the more needy members of the parish; and at the same time it brings into play, in the parishioners who have a larger share of this world's goods, the noble qualities of sympathy, generosity, and true friendliness, without touch of condescension, for all those who are their brethren in Jesus Christ.

## ST. PETER'S PARISH LIFE

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The House is in a central and suitable locality. Its principal work is a Day Nursery and Employment Bureau in charge of two devoted Sisters of Charity, who come every day except Sunday from the Infant Asylum and remain until evening. Children from one month old up to five years old, whose mothers are obliged to work in order to support their families, are admitted to the Nursery, where a kindergarten class is conducted each morning; and their little brothers and sisters, who attend school, but have no one to look after them at noon, are given a good dinner at five cents each. These children come every morning, before school, for morning prayer and a half-hour of catechism. In the afternoon, after school, they come again for a light luncheon, and remain until their mothers call for them. Thus they are kept from the streets; while the mainspring of faithful Christian living—the personal love of Jesus Christ—is put into these fresh young hearts, which, as soon as they are capable of receiving an impression, are moulded after the Heart of the Holy Child.

The Sisters' presence, their scientific care, and their ceaseless work among the little ones, have done very much towards the success of the Nursery.

### SUMMARY OF NURSERY WORK FOR 1908.

Children on the Nursery Record . . . . .	160
Families represented . . . . .	80
Average daily attendance . . . . .	50
Cost per child per day . . . . .	12½ cents
Total attendance for 1908 . . . . .	12,865
Total attendance since opening . . . . .	36,565

Work secured for 80 women, averaging 3 days a week for each.

Garments made for poor children, 250.

Christmas tree for 160 children, with toys, candy, books, and useful gifts.



## *A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD*

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The House is incorporated, and is under the management of a Board of Directors, of which Father Ronan is honorary president. An association of charitable women, called the Guild of Our Lady of Mercy, assists the House financially in securing a steady and definite income. These ladies have also taken up the work of sewing for the poor in the parish, and during the Christmas season of 1908 they furnished an outfit for one hundred poor children. No outside appeal is made for this distinctively parish work, and it is kept in due relationship to the general parish needs.

Some attempt has already been made to establish boys' clubs, stenography classes, sewing classes, etc., but that work is still in its beginning.

We have faith that the Frederic Ozanam House will grow; that, striking deep its roots into the general parish life, it will prove a blessing to an increasing number of souls, drawn through its activities to serve their brethren; and that it will produce, in those to whom it may minister, a deeper attachment and a more uncompromising loyalty to the Catholic Church, who has tender solicitude not only for the eternal welfare but also for the present happiness of every one of her children.

As these benefits increase, we should not forget what praise is due to the far-sighted pastor who had the wisdom to give to subordinates a free field in the building up of so useful a charity.

We are thus afforded an instance of a singularly complete parish life. Here is the noble church, a holy and beautiful home for the people, where the God-given love of beauty is gratified, and rich and poor may feel that they share alike in a loveliness that appeals to the eye and heart. The school is here, to educate our boys and girls in religion as well as in science. The convent is here. All debts are paid. But we



## ST. PETER'S PARISH LIFE

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need not ask what is left for the future generations to do for God. The Society for the Propagation of the Faith is planted in the parish,—that society which probably in the very near future is to develop widely in our land, rich in generous vocations and noble gifts for the missionary field. The League of the Sacred Heart and various Sodalities are planted here, to kindle in souls an apostolic fire. The Infant Asylum is here, with its wide opportunities of loving service; and the Conference and the Frederic Ozanam House, with far-reaching possibilities for bringing the people into closer ties of brotherliness in a spirit of self-sacrifice in the service of Christ's poor.

St. Peter's Conference of St. Vincent de Paul observed its twenty-fifth anniversary, Nov. 15, 1909, in the Percival Cottage, Father Ronan's first home in Dorchester. During those twenty-five years, the money received by the Conference for its various charitable works has been as follows:—

Collections at weekly meetings . . . . .	\$3,391
Donations . . . . .	2,894
Collections in church . . . . .	14,249
From other sources . . . . .	6,166
Total Receipts . . . . .	<u>\$26,700</u>
Expenditures . . . . .	\$26,581
Annual collection in church, Feb. 27, 1910 .	\$1,070

In the twenty-five years, the average attendance at the weekly meetings has been seventy-five per cent. There are now twenty-one members, some of whom have served continuously from the beginning. The visits made to the homes of the poor number in all 22,768; and many thousands of pieces of clothing, sent in by the parishioners, have been distributed. About five thousand dollars have been expended for Christmas dinners. Since the Guild of Our Lady of Mercy was formed about two years ago,

## *A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD*

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2,500 pieces of clothing have been made by its large sewing-circle, which meets every Wednesday afternoon at the old Percival Cottage.

The Free Home for Consumptives is located within the parish, but it is not a parish charity. From its opening the spiritual needs of its inmates have been sedulously attended to by the priests of St. Peter's, who, however, have not been in any way associated with its financial management or its administrative policy.

The simple statements that are presented in this chapter indicate how complete are the arrangements of St. Peter's parish, how strong are its foundations, and how far-reaching will be its good work in the future.

## *FATHER RONAN'S CHARACTER*

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### ESTIMATES OF FATHER RONAN'S CHARACTER.

While Father Ronan had the faculty of getting all the money that he needed, he nevertheless enjoyed the reputation of being lenient and easy with the people in money matters. Perhaps there was no church in the diocese where there was less said about money. He was a remarkably prudent financier. He would go on with his building while there was money to pay the bills. When more money was needed, he would stop the work and wait until God sent the funds. Between his coming to Dorchester in 1872 and the dedication of the church in 1884, a period of twelve years, there were seven fairs and eight collections. Two of these fairs and two collections occurred in the first one and one-half years, and amounted to \$21,500, as we have said before. To the money raised then and afterward the pastor quietly added his quota.

On several occasions his thoughtful parishioners wished to present him with a horse and carriage, but he invariably refused, saying that, if they would give him the amount for the church, he would cheerfully continue to walk. No mortgage was raised on the church until the walls were ready for the roof. The work was paid for up to that time, and then a mortgage of \$17,500 only was raised on a \$90,000 building. After the church was dedicated in 1884, until the building of his school in 1896, there was but one fair for the school and one general collection. Yet, when he came to erect the school, there was no special effort made in the way of appeal from the altar, or by fairs, concerts, and the like; there was no undue pressing of the people. Quietly the work went on, and the school was finished, practically free from debt. His financial acumen

## *A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD*

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was again justified; but into the school had gone his own salary for three years, and the purse of \$2,600 given to him by his parishioners on his return from Europe. One fair was held in the school after it was built, and one general house-to-house collection was made. These were the only extraordinary means used for the erection of the solidly built, carefully constructed school.

He always decided clearly and definitely what was wanted before he began any work, and he chose the men to do it who knew how to do it, and these men were paid with absolute promptness and regularity according to agreement. Consequently, his buildings, under his ever-watchful supervision, went up smoothly and steadily, except when, in his dread of debt, he waited for more money.

One day a certain member of St. Peter's parish was asked by a friend, a non-Catholic, the president of one of our Boston banks, to introduce him to Father Ronan, saying that he had long watched him and his buildings with much attention. After some conversation Father Ronan left them, and then the bank president remarked that it would pay the mayor if he could only engage such a man to take charge of the erection of all the public buildings in Boston. Some years having passed, Father Ronan was engaged in the erection of the new children's building at St. Mary's Infant Asylum, and it was difficult at that time to raise money; but Father Ronan applied to the bank above mentioned, and not only was the loan advanced him, but at a lower rate than was then current.

Says a professional man, well acquainted with Father Ronan's life and work:—

“Father Ronan is kindly in thought, considerate in action, charitable in judgment and during his pastorate at St. Peter's



## *FATHER RONAN'S CHARACTER*

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has been the exemplar of that simplicity which distinguishes true greatness. Occupied in a large field amid ever-increasing duties, the sunshine of his disposition never lost its warmth. The smile and cordial greeting which were characteristic of him in the days of early struggles and hard work, still had their charm when the task neared completion, and the rough paths had been worn smooth by the persistent effort of his untiring labor.

“He is known and loved. What can be added to those words? While naturally dignified, he always appeared gracious and hearty, and, although much occupied with parish duties, all could approach with confidence and greet him. Especially has he drawn to him the hearts of children, and than this in life there can be few better tests of true simplicity of heart.

“As a citizen, he has ever upheld lofty ideals, his earnest support being given to those causes which tended toward the uplifting of all classes. His voice is heard, alike denouncing the unjust laws which governed his own dear birthplace and in approval of meritorious movements of local importance.

“On many a stormy day, when he might have enjoyed, without trouble, the shelter of home, he trudged from store to office with no thought of the exposure, but with his delicate diplomacy always ready collecting for that charity toward women and children which is so dear to his heart.

“The work necessitated by the business affairs of St. Peter's was peculiar and exacting. To commence, with so few families, the erection of the buildings comprising a parish plant; to develop it successfully, building by building; to keep the work free at all times from financial entanglement; and to have it now completed, through the generosity of his parishioners and his own business acumen, with all debts paid,—is to have accomplished the work of an extraordinary man. When we consider, in addi-



## *A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD*

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tion, that all the buildings are well planned, beautifully grouped, and, as a whole, are perhaps equal to any in the diocese, then Father Ronan's superior business judgment may be appreciated.

"It is, however, in his priestly life that his gifts of kindness, oratory, and keen business insight were more conspicuously used for the advancement of religion."

The following estimate is from a Catholic teacher in a public school, who has had unusual opportunities for observing the characteristics of the pastor of St. Peter's Church:—

"You ask me to give an estimate of Father Ronan's character. What can I say except that he is a priest of God in every word and every action; a man of the people, in that he came from them and understands them and loves them; a man of the world, in that he knows its ways by the light of divine wisdom and by a wide experience, which has developed a ripe and calm judgment, so that, while he walks in the world, he is not of it; and, essentially and above all, a man of God, in his constant union with Him, and the simplicity that characterizes those of the kingdom of heaven. A constant and firm friend; a wise counsellor, whose few words and whose very jests are fraught with wisdom; a zealous and fatherly pastor,—those who know him best, love and revere him most deeply."

Few persons realize how great a power for the public good Father Ronan has been in Boston, or what Dorchester, as a community, owes to him in the furtherance of her best and highest interests. Without rancor or vilifying or sharp speech he has taken what he considers the wisest course in political affairs. He has proved his right to be considered one of our able and apt public speakers by his addresses at the dedication of the Lyman Fountain placed in Eaton Square, just opposite St. Peter's Church, in 1885, and at the banquet tendered to the

## FATHER RONAN'S CHARACTER

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Hon. Patrick A. Collins, prior to his departure to England as United States consul in 1893; and by his historical address in Symphony Hall, September 29, 1903, on the occasion of the one hundredth anniversary of the building of the first Catholic church in Boston. On May 18, 1895, he was toastmaster at the splendid banquet tendered to Archbishop Williams in Music Hall, Boston, on the occasion of that venerable prelate's Golden Jubilee, the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination to the sacred priesthood. The great hall was thronged with enthusiastic guests. On the platform, in the place of honor, were the Archbishop, Cardinal Gibbons, and the Papal Delegate Monsignor (later, Cardinal) Satolli, in their robes of office. About them were gathered eight Archbishops, Elder of Cincinnati, Ryan of Philadelphia, Chapelle of New Orleans, Ireland of St. Paul, Riordan of San Francisco, Corrigan of New York, Hennessey of Dubuque, Fabre of Quebec, with Bishop Gabriels of Ogdensburg and every Bishop of the New England Province, Healy of Portland, Bradley of Manchester, De Goesbriand and Michaud of Burlington, Beavens of Springfield, Tierney of Hartford, Harkins of Providence, and Brady of Boston. Governor Greenhalge of Massachusetts was also present, and Alderman Allen of the city of Boston.

The post-prandial exercises were opened by Father Ronan. His introduction of the speakers was in his happiest vein; his voice could be heard distinctly over the large hall of the assembly, and his words and manner exerted the happiest effect upon the vast audience. Three hearty cheers were given for the accomplished toastmaster before the grand assemblage dissolved.

The *Sacred Heart Review* of May 25 says: "While the splendid celebration which the Archbishop's jubilee obtained last week was excellent in its entirety, there were some things in

## *A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD*

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it which seem to call for special mention and commendation. Such, for instance, were the admirable arrangements made by the banquet committee, the chairman of which was the Reverend Peter Ronan, whereby everything moved so smoothly and decorously at Music Hall. . . . Father Ronan, as toastmaster, was exceedingly felicitous in the remarks with which he introduced the several speakers."

Father Ronan's chief service as a speaker has been, of course, in his office as preacher.

To the apostolic work of preaching he has brought a solidity of doctrine, a soundness of judgment, a knowledge of human nature and of the needs of the people, a solemnity of manner and a force of utterance, which have made his forty years in the pulpit a continual source of instruction, edification and great helpfulness.

Deep down in his nature is the moving pathos which usually accompanies kindly humor such as he possesses. Uniting simplicity and clearness to strength and sincerity, he is always impressive, and when the subject or the occasion stirs the depths of his feeling, he is powerfully eloquent.

Who shall estimate the force for good which such preaching of the Gospel, illustrated by the example of the preacher's own life, has generated in Dorchester during twoscore years!







ST. PETER'S PARISH SCHOOL.

"Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth."—ECCLESIASTES 12:1.



## *FATHER RONAN'S RUBY JUBILEE*

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### FATHER RONAN'S RUBY JUBILEE.

In June, 1908, Father Ronan's Ruby Jubilee, or fortieth anniversary of ordination to the sacred priesthood, was royally observed. The actual day, June 6, was kept in a quiet and sacred manner, the jubilarian celebrating Mass in the early morning in the convent chapel, in presence of the Sisters of the school and of a dozen friends who had the rare privilege of being present on that solemn occasion. The real heart of the Ruby Jubilee lay there, in that anniversary Mass of thanksgiving, when the venerable priest stood face to face with his Sacramental Lord, to consecrate Whose precious Body and Blood the tremendous power had been bestowed on him just forty years before. Moved almost beyond control, Father Ronan then turned and spoke to his few hearers of his gratitude to God, through Whom alone he had been enabled to do anything at all in His service. And humbly he declared, like a little child, that, whatever might have been his mistakes or his failures, he had "tried to do right."

"He had tried to do right, and God had been his help." That was his simple, unvarnished story. Yet we all knew that within the limits of his original parish were now four parishes,—St. Peter's, St. Margaret's, St. Leo's, St. Paul's,—one to a decade of his priestly life; that the most glorious church-building in all Dorchester was his work, with the school, and the convent, and the rectory, and the infant asylum. But he had no word to say of these things. He had tried to do right, and God had helped him.

On Sunday, June 28, the feast of the parish and the jubilee of the pastor were commemorated, in the church which he had

## A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD

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erected, by the flock who had known no other pastor than himself. As he stood at that altar celebrating the Solemn High Mass that day, he could truly offer to God each inch of that holy place as done by himself, for it was under his own supervision that stone by stone had been cemented into place. He might indeed say:—

“And if it fell, why then ’twere well  
That I with it should fall,  
Since, for my part, I have built my heart  
In the courses of its wall.”

Father Ronan had given the honor of preaching the jubilee sermon to Father Halloran. No wonder the speaker rose to heights of impassioned eloquence, for in him the past and the present met, and *cor ad cor loquitur*, as the glowing words went on and thrilled the listeners’ souls.

Yet to other priests than Father Ronan it has been given to celebrate their jubilee in a church that they have builded, with the only flock that has been under their pastoral care. But perhaps never in the history of the archdiocese has there been a public celebration in honor of a parish priest to equal that which occurred on Monday evening, June 29, in St. Peter’s parish. Not in a hall was the great gathering made, but under the open sky, in one of the most beautiful spots to be found in Eastern Massachusetts. There, on a broad hill-top, with the stars above them, the people assembled on that fair June evening, after a day of threatening clouds and heavy showers, to tender to their beloved pastor a great public demonstration. One of the parishioners of St. Peter’s parish, Mr. P. F. Carey, with generous and loyal devotion freely offered his house and fine grounds to Father Ronan for the event. The scene was one of heavenly loveliness. From tree to tree were swung myr-

## *FATHER RONAN'S RUBY JUBILEE*

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iads of many-colored, softly gleaming lanterns, swaying gently on the evening air, and seeming like some beautiful reflection of the quietly radiant skies above.

Special tickets of invitation had been sent to all families of the parish; but it was a respectful multitude, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, thousands in number, that gathered to greet this Catholic priest whose long, blameless life in that one parish had won more than his own flock to honor him. The music was rendered by the Salem Cadet Band, with a large chorus of trained voices under the direction of Miss Katherine Moore, the organist of St. Peter's Church. Father Ronan came up the avenue escorted by an old guard of the early parishioners. Mr. Michael H. Norton, an old parishioner, presided; and, from the balcony of the house, addresses were made by the Reverend James J. Chittick, pastor of the Church of the Most Precious Blood, Hyde Park, Father Ronan's first assistant at St. Peter's, by Mr. Richard C. Humphreys, a descendant of one of the early settlers of Dorchester and a prominent member of the old "First Church" on Meeting House Hill, and by Dr. Henry C. Towle, who in early days had ministered faithfully to the suffering poor of St. Peter's, before its Conference was begun.

The quiet, reigning in that immense throng during the two hours that the exercises lasted, was extraordinary. It was more than a spirit of festivity: it was a spirit of reverence and awe. As the lovely music floated upward on the peaceful air, a sense of something beyond this earth impressed the mind with a holy and lasting influence.

And as Father Ronan stood there on that balcony, the centre of that throng of reverent, admiring friends, he could see Dorchester Bay, and, beyond it, was the ocean, over which he had come, a laughing little lad, sixty years before.

## *A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD*

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What, by God's grace and favor, had he not wrought in Dorchester! He had planted there, for all time, the one true Church of the Eternal God.

No debt was there, to cloud the calm content of that lovely evening; and no rancor was there. He had made peace in Dorchester, he had shown forth there the beauty of holiness. Prejudice and evil speaking and anger against Catholics had died away before the daily benediction of his simple, holy life here, for thirty-six long, quiet years. He had found here a handful of Catholics, and to-night a large proportion of Dorchester's greatly augmented population was Catholic; and of those people gathered before him, to do him honor, many were non-Catholics; and to all, that night, he was friend and father. The veil had fallen from that every-day, quiet life, spent without noise or clamor or ostentation in our midst, and we saw him as God sees him. We saw and knew that in his extraordinary simplicity lay the secret of his extraordinary success. There he stood, the simple-hearted, untiring friend and pastor, an honor to the archdiocese, noble among his brothers, wise and sagacious and far-seeing beyond the usual order of men.

There are men who speak by their burning eloquence. This man has spoken by his deeds. They reveal the strong, tireless, heroic purpose of the simple, single, steadfast heart, filled with spiritual aims and motives that shall one day be known and read of all.



## THE RECEPTION TO FATHER RONAN

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### THE RECEPTION TO FATHER RONAN.

#### ORDER OF EXERCISES

AT THE

#### RECEPTION AND PRESENTATION TO THE REVEREND PETER RONAN, P.R.,

MONDAY EVENING, JUNE 29, 1908.

MUSIC . . . . . SALEM CADET BAND  
CHORUS (fifty voices). "To thee, O Country" . . . . . CHOIR  
ADDRESS . . . . . The Reverend J. J. CHITTICK, Hyde Park  
CHORUS. "Il Trovatore" . . . . . CHOIR  
ADDRESS . . . . . Mr. RICHARD C. HUMPHREYS  
CHORUS. "Quoniam Deus Dominus" . . . . . CHOIR  
ADDRESS FROM PARISHIONERS . . . . . Dr. HENRY C. TOWLE  
PRESENTATION.  
RESPONSE . . . . . The Rev. PETER RONAN, P.R.  
CHORUS. "Viva Pio Decimo" . . . . . CHOIR  
CHORUS AND AUDIENCE. "Te Deum."  
RECEPTION.

Mr. Norton, the chairman of the Executive Committee, spoke as follows:—

"*Reverend Fathers, Ladies and Gentlemen*,—We gather here on this beautiful spot to rejoice with and to congratulate our beloved pastor on the fortieth anniversary of his ordination to the holy priesthood, and also to congratulate him on his thirty-sixth year as pastor of this parish, on his faithful, zealous care for his flock, and on the great work he has accomplished.

"Your presence here in such large numbers testifies to the

## A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD

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love, respect, and admiration in which Father Ronan is held by his people.

“After Father Ronan had toiled alone in this scattered parish for three years, he asked for an assistant, and a young man was sent to him, a Boston boy, full of youth and vigor, piety and devotion. He worked hard and faithfully, particularly among the poor and sick, for ten years, and the people of this parish have a warm spot for him in their hearts. The late lamented Archbishop Williams recognized his faithful work and ability, and finally appointed him pastor to the large, flourishing parish of the Church of the Precious Blood, Hyde Park. I have the pleasure of introducing Reverend Father Chittick.”

Father Chittick first read a letter of congratulation from His Grace, the Most Reverend Archbishop O’Connell.

Father Chittick then spoke appreciatively of Father Ronan’s life as he had the privilege of witnessing it, in the long and happy years that he was allowed to spend beside him, as his assistant, in the old Percival Cottage; and of the influence for good exerted on himself as a young priest by the wise pastor, who to him was brother, friend, and father. He summarized the work Father Ronan had done, and dwelt with emphasis upon the important service that his later life had rendered to the solid establishment of religion in Dorchester by the erection of the Parish School.

As Father Chittick spoke without manuscript, we are unable to present his address in full.

Mr. Humphreys was then introduced, and spoke as follows:—

“*Mr. Chairman, Reverend Sir, and Friends*,—I deem it not only a pleasure, but a privilege and an honor, to be allowed to come here to-night and present my congratulations to you, Reverend Father Ronan, on this fortieth anniversary of your

## *THE RECEPTION TO FATHER RONAN*

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priesthood and the thirty-sixth year of your faithful, self-sacrificing labors for the moral and spiritual uplifting of this your Dorchester parish. I am also to represent, at this reception, that large number of your neighbors and friends who are outside of your immediate Church, but who realize the good influence you have exerted and wish to extend to you their heartfelt congratulations. Had your neighbor, Dr. Benjamin Cushing, been living to-day, how pleased he would have been to occupy this position; and had Rev. Eugene R. Shippen, who was pastor for thirteen years of the First Church in Dorchester, just the other side of the Common, been with us to-day, he would, in far better language than I can command, express the thoughts that I am trying to present.

“I congratulate you, Reverend Sir, on your success as a spiritual leader and comforter. Who can estimate the good you have done in this community in raising the standard of morality, uplifting the fallen, comforting the mourner, and strengthening the morally weak? You have stood for civic righteousness and purity in both public and private life. You have thrown your influence on the side of temperance, the sacredness of home and family, and have helped to throw around the young those uplifting influences that would strengthen their characters and better prepare them to meet the trials and temptations of life.

“I appreciate the honor of having worked with you, Father Ronan, in trying to advance the best interests of the good old town of Dorchester. You have helped to obtain playgrounds for our boys and girls, knowing that they tend towards moral improvement; and you have helped us to preserve historic spots, having at heart the best interests of the people. You have not sought to live a life of luxury, but have been ever ready to answer

## A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD

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the call of duty, even at great personal sacrifice. I can see the exemplification of your life in the thought expressed in this beautiful hymn:—

‘Father, hear the prayer we offer !  
Not for ease that prayer shall be;  
But for strength that we may ever  
Live our lives courageously.

‘Not forever in green pastures  
Do we ask our way to be;  
But the steep and rugged pathway  
May we tread rejoicingly.

‘Not forever by still waters  
Would we, idly quiet, stay,  
But would smite the living fountains  
From the rocks along the way.

‘Be our strength in hours of weakness;  
In our wanderings be our guide;  
Through endeavor, failure, danger,  
Father, be Thou at our side!’

“Father Ronan, you have received strength in hours of weakness from this source. You have walked with God in the steep and rugged pathway of life, and He has been your guide and comforter. I sincerely believe that we have all been placed in this world by a loving Heavenly Father to fill a certain position, to do a work that His will has mapped out for us; that we are the instruments in God’s hand to carry on His work, and that that work is to uplift humanity and draw the world up nearer to Himself. This is what you, Reverend Sir, have been doing in this community for the past thirty-six years. I congratulate you, Father, that you have had so fruitful a field



## THE RECEPTION TO FATHER RONAN

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in which to work. I congratulate you, my friends, that you have had so devoted a Father to comfort you in sickness and in health, and to lead you to a higher and a nobler life. May God's richest blessing rest upon you, my friend, and give you many more years in which to do His work in the world. Yes! God's work in this community, for we are not perfect yet, and we still need moral and spiritual leadership in both public and private life.

"I thank you for the opportunity to be here to-night, and enjoy with you this very pleasant occasion. I thank you for the privilege not only of offering my own congratulations, but those of your neighbors and friends, to both pastor and people, on the blessings of the past and the prospects for the future."

The chairman then presented Dr. Towle, who said:—

"*Fellow Parishioners and Reverend Father*,—Some gentlemen of our church, with more generosity and faith than wisdom, have done themselves an injury by making me the mouth-piece of their appreciation of your thirty-six years' pastorate in Dorchester. Somewhat older than themselves in experience, they naturally thought me fit for the part of Rip Van Winkle. Venerable as I look, I was not at the beginning of St. Peter's when, thirty-six years ago, Dorchester was speckled with Catholicity as a child with chicken-pox. There were patches of it scattered here and there, and our dissenting neighbors were very much afraid of catching it; but the religion, however, was not infectious, simply contagious, and those of them that took it have felt ever so much better for having had it.

"A bird's-eye view of religious Dorchester then shows clusters of Catholics in a population of several denominations,—a population tolerant, but not too friendly, from controversies

## *A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD*

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very recently closed. Simple people they were, mostly born in Ireland, retaining by their close association with each other the honesty and sincerity which they brought across the sea, firm in the Faith for which their forebears had suffered for generations. To them came, in the panic year of the early seventies, a young man with brown curling hair, a rosy complexion, eyes twinkling with humor, and an accent that recalled the bells of Shandon and the River Lee, and with the task before him of making these little clusters of the faithful, not into a parish, as it turned out, but almost into a diocese. If Father Ronan's entire charge at that time had pooled all their material resources, they could not have built the basement of the present church. A financial magnate in our parish at that time was a laborer who had worked the year round: the average man toiled on the streets, or as a gardener, only six months in the year. Small wages and little opportunity to earn them marked the greater part of the years from 1872 to 1880. Among people pinched with poverty, and living in isolated little communities, was started the building of the church and its dependencies, which was to show in one life more money spent in their erection than was spent in all the churches in Dorchester in the previous two hundred and forty years of its existence; and that money represents more value received than any similar expenditure of like amount. Not a dollar was laid out that did not bring its full equivalent in labor or material. Father Ronan was simple, was bland, was smiling, but never absent from the work, and, acting as a trustee for his people, was so good a business man that some contractors of that day believed that it was the Scotch Hebrews and not the Milesians that settled the part of Ireland whence the Ronans came. A great church, a great rectory, a large school, a large convent, a great infant asylum and maternity hospital,—what





A STRONGHOLD OF THE CATHOLIC FAITH.



## *THE RECEPTION TO FATHER RONAN*

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charity, human and divine, has not been spanned by the records of your thirty-six years' ministry in Dorchester? There is no better evidence of the great material success of your mission than that we, living on the eastern side of Dorchester Avenue, once the main land of your parish, are now merely the beach fringing one side of it.

"Great emperors have preserved their memory by colossal tombs. A great priest has chosen better in leaving as his monument buildings which, by perpetuating his memory as long as they stand, shall be used for the eternal salvation of all succeeding generations. God has given to you to be the ancestor of St. Peter's parish and its offshoots for a thousand years to come; but it is a privilege whose obligations were met with the simplicity and unselfish sincerity that made you truly worthy of it. Other people, however, can more worthily chant your architectural achievements. Between two panics, 1873 and 1907, and another, 1893, thrown in for good measure, you have erected buildings worth nearly half a million dollars, and yet this was only an incident in your real life-work. For your people of your parish are gathered here to-night not alone for that, but in testimony of your life as a preacher of the gospel of peace and of good-will among men. Church, convents, schools, are only the clothes that wrap the real body of your work. Not for them, but for other and more glorious achievements you see the assemblage here to-night, though the good citizen always is interested in the material welfare of his fellow-townsmen; but for the blameless life that taught bigotry reverence, that taught intolerance shame, and which no unkindness could provoke to retaliation. Above all, are we come together in grateful recollection of the divine mission of forty years, with its battalions of stainless cherubs receiving their First Commun-

## A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD

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ion as its annual calendar. Nor are we alone to-night. The stalwart and strong of years ago, now mere memory-shadows, join in our recognition of God's goodness to us and of His kindness to you. Not alone are we to-night. Troops of white-robed innocents rescued for eternal life by Baptism, companies of sinners repentant whom you restored to salvation, dying eyes which long ago brightened in the dusk of the sick-room at your sacerdotal presence,—all these are here to-night in the commission of gratitude and love which I am charged to bear you. They are with you to-night in the evening dusk, unseen, but they join us in wishing you, not further achievement, but long enjoyment on this earth of the achievement done, and they stand eager to welcome you in a truly Catholic manner into that larger congregation of St. Peter's which you have built into eternity."

At the conclusion of his address, Dr. Towle presented to Father Ronan a magnificent chalice of exquisite design and workmanship, made of pure gold with a jewelled cross,—the gift of the parishioners to their pastor as a fitting token of their love and their esteem.

Father Ronan then replied to these addresses and to the presentation in the following words:—

*"Reverend Fathers, invited Guests, and my dear Parishioners,*—My first thought this evening is to thank you all from my heart for your presence here on this occasion. The event which you are helping me to celebrate is dear to me, as it must be to every priest permitted through the goodness of God to labor for the long period of forty years in the sacred ministry. Sincerely do I thank God for this favor, and for all the other blessings vouchsafed to me during this long span of life.

"I appreciate the many good things that have been said

## *THE RECEPTION TO FATHER RONAN*

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about me this evening, and especially the kind letter of His Grace Archbishop O'Connell, whose presence here to-night would have given us all so much happiness.

"But the credit of the work is due principally to the loyalty and generosity of my parishioners, especially the pioneer Catholics whom I found here in 1872. In that year, now famous in the history of Boston, your parish was formed. The original lines extended from Washington Village on the north to Blue Hill Avenue on the south, and from the famous brook that divided Dorchester from Roxbury on the west to Dorchester Bay on the east. The territory was large, but the Catholic population was small, not numbering more than two hundred families at the time. The people were poor in the goods of earth, but rich in faith and confidence in God. No people could make greater sacrifices for religion than were made by the early Catholics of Dorchester in building their new church, which was opened for divine service on Easter Sunday, 1875. Your parish property at the present time could not, in my judgment, be duplicated for less than \$400,000. I am pleased to tell you that it is free from debt.

"Three new parishes have been made from the original territory. They are in a flourishing condition under the guidance of zealous and prudent priests.

"In the early days of the parish we needed assistance and encouragement, and I am glad to say that we received both, in no small degree, from some of the foremost citizens of Dorchester who were not members of our parish. The parish will always hold dear the names of William Hunt of Savin Hill, Samuel B. Pierce of Upham's Corner, Dr. Benjamin Cushing, Nahum Capen, Dr. Gilbert, and last, but not least, Richard Humphreys, one of the most respected citizens of Dorchester,

## *A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD*

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to whose address we have all just listened with so much pleasure. I am glad to see with us here this evening some of the children and relatives of the old representative Dorchester families who were our staunch friends when we needed friends most. We extend to them a most cordial greeting, and assure them that they will always be welcome at our parish gatherings.

“There has always existed a spirit of harmony and goodwill between St. Peter’s parish and the citizens of Dorchester in the past, and we will leave nothing undone to foster and perpetuate that happy relationship in the future.

“Words fail me to thank adequately the donors of the beautiful chalice which has been presented to me this evening. I prize it more highly than any other gift you could make to me; and, so long as God shall will it, it will be used in His divine service and for the benefit of St. Peter’s parish.”



## *JUBILEE SERMON*

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JUBILEE SERMON  
DELIVERED BY THE  
REVEREND FLORENCE J. HALLORAN  
ON THE OCCASION  
OF THE  
FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY  
OF THE  
REVEREND PETER RONAN, P.R.

“Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”—ST. MATTHEW xvi. 18.

This is a day of joy for us, my brethren. It is the patronal feast of pastor and of people. It is a day which vividly reminds us of our glorious heritage of faith; which makes us feel with pride that we are members of a spiritual organization embracing heaven and earth, and whose history is the story of the last two thousand years.

Our minds go in triumph to-day from our pastor, Peter, who has literally built this church upon a rock, back through the ages of uninterrupted Apostolic Succession, until we come to him whom Christ has made the Great Pastor, Saint Peter, the spiritual rock on whom, after our Lord, is built for all time the Universal Church.

And, in addition to the joy which naturally arises on the feast of the great Apostle, we have another and a very special reason for exultation to-day; for on this day our pastor gives public thanks to God for the forty years of his priesthood.

Forty years a priest! Forty years of daily recitation of the

## A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD

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Divine Office! Forty years of daily offering of the tremendous Sacrifice of the altar! Forty years of administration of the life-giving Sacraments of Baptism and Penance! Forty years of preaching the Word of God and feeding the flock with the Sacred Body of the Lord! Forty years of a blameless, unspotted life, lived in the sight of all men! Forty years of priestly virtue and of holy influence, of the gravest responsibilities accepted without flinching, and of difficult duties perseveringly done! Forty years a high example, a comfort and an inspiration to his people and his brother priests!

We might profitably give the entire time which can be devoted to the day's sermon to a review of the faithful labors of Father Ronan in Dorchester; but his modesty, which shrinks from praise, has bidden me to speak to you of the feast, and so I shall ask you to consider once again the place which the Prince of the Apostles—the mighty patron of this church—holds in the plan of God's providence.

### THE INSTITUTION OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

The Son of God came down from heaven to bring to mankind the fulness of grace and the fulness of truth. To communicate both to the end of time, He instituted a Society, or Church, which should be the guardian of divine truth and the dispenser of grace.

This Church was to spread the light of revelation, and to pour out the waters of salvation, as long as there should be a darkened intellect and a sin-stained soul.

But what guarantee was there, that, in the lapse of ages and the span of continents, this Society, as it sent forth its missionaries to lands as distant as India and America, and as divergent in customs, prejudices, politics and philosophy as

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the Orient is from the Occident, would preserve intact the deposit of faith, would lose none of the primordial means of grace, would keep unalloyed the spirit of the new Dispensation? What was to prevent it from breaking up into fragments, each fragment a law unto itself?

There can be nothing enduring without some inward principle of consistency. There can be no great art, no great life, without unity of purpose. The universe itself, with its marvellous complexities and overpowering vastness, what would it be without unity of design, of purpose, and of government? An endless war of mutually repellent atoms. As there can be no circle without a centre, so there can be no universality without unity.

### UNITY OF THE CHURCH.

Of necessity, then, since Christ willed that His ministry was to be carried on through a Church, He must have made Unity a distinctive characteristic of that Church. And, turning to the Gospels, we find that this is just what He did, and that there was nothing He longed for more than this self-same Unity. For this He prayed on that last sacred night before His crucifixion. Saint John tells us that, just before going forth into the Garden of Olives, Jesus, lifting up His eyes to heaven, said: "Father, the hour is come. . . . I pray not for the world, but for them whom Thou hast given Me. Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, that they may be one, as We also are. . . . And not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in Me; that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee; that they also may be one in Us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." No union which was merely human could be the answer to this prayer. No mere union of good works, no confederacy of

## *A CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD*

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independent churches, could fulfil that desire expressed by the incarnate God on the threshold of His agony. The Son of God prayed for a living unity of heart and mind, of creed and life, amongst all those who to the end of time should be His. And what man can dare to think that such a prayer could go unanswered?

That supernatural Unity of the Church, having as its model and source the Unity of God, was to be the mark and proof of God's abiding presence in her. That Unity was, therefore, to be visible, and, since it was to be the beacon-light to point the way to safety for all future ages, it was to be permanent. Christ wished His Church to be built on Unity, and He determined to place the centre of this Unity in one man.

### SAINT PETER THE CENTRE OF UNITY.

And where, among the chosen people of God, should He find an individual who united in himself all the qualities demanded in the head and centre of a Society which was to revolutionize the world and to bear within its bosom the destinies of mankind? Did He go, in His search, to the schools of Hillel or Gamaliel? Did He look among the first families of Jerusalem? Did He seek out a powerful, aristocratic Sadducee? Did He choose one who had sat in the chair of Moses? He looked for a man of heroic mould who could bear alone the weight of the structure of salvation which He was to establish. And He found him, not among the Princes of the House of Juda, but in despised Galilee; not a child of luxury and pomp, but a man from out the common people, a humble fisherman, whose features had been bronzed by an Eastern sun, whose hands had been hardened by continuous toil, whose daily sustenance had been wrested from the uncertain waves of the



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Lake of Genesareth. And, as the Master turned His eyes upon that man, He looked through the rough exterior and saw behind it a great soul,—a soul that had its faults, to be sure, for impetuous and self-willed it was, but a noble soul full of immense possibilities, a soul with generosity unbounded, with earnestness unflinching, with a faith deep as the foundations of the world, with a love stronger than death. And, reading him through and through, Jesus at that first interview said to him: “Thou art Simon, the son of Jonas: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is, interpreted, Peter,—a rock.” That is, thou art now the son of feebleness, but thou shalt be transformed into strength immovable.

### GIVING OF SAINT PETER’S COMMISSION.

What our Lord here intimated, He afterwards clearly promised in the memorable scene described in the gospel of the feast, which I have read to you.

In spite of His miracles and His character, Jesus had been rejected by the learned in the law and by the leaders of the people. Judea had shut its eyes to the evidences of His mission; and now Galilee, too, Capharnaum, Chorozain, and Bethsaida, one after another, had rejected Him. So the Master left in sadness the shores of Galilee and withdrew to the north, into the country around Cæsarea Philippi, seeking a resting-place at the foot of Mt. Hermon, in the valleys which the water-springs of the Jordan fill with the music of numberless brooks. Here Jesus called to His disciples and began to question them, “Who do men say that I am?”

Sorrowfully came the answer that as yet none had acknowledged Jesus to be the long-desired Messiah. And then the Saviour, as though He feared that, in the face of so much opposition, even His Apostles would cease to believe in Him,

asked, "But who do you say that I am?" This was a test question. The Doctors of the Law, who knew the Messianic prophecies by heart, had called Jesus an impostor, an inciter to sedition, a man in league with Beelzebub, a Sabbath-breaker and a blasphemer. But Peter, in answer to that question, with quick and living faith lifted the veil which overhung the Divinity of the Saviour, and, with the noble impetuosity of his nature, burst into that magnificent confession of faith which shall sound with clarion note through every age: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

That answer went straight to the Saviour's heart, and in joyful gratitude He exclaimed: "Blessed art thou, Simon, the son of Jonas: because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father Who is in heaven. And I say to thee: That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven."

Glorious faith! Glorious reward! Peter rises above the blindness of the nation, and declares, by himself alone, with the precision of a General Council, the Godhead and Messiahship of Christ. And, in return, Jesus, in the words of Saint Leo, takes Peter into the fellowship of an inseparable unity and makes of him the immovable rock upon which He builds His Church.

#### HEADSHIP AND POWER OF PETER.

Thus did Christ secure Unity of foundation by leaving to one man the headship of His Church. To that same man He gave the plenitude of spiritual power, symbolized by the keys

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of the kingdom of heaven. These are the keys which open, and no man shutteth; which shut, and no man openeth. Through Peter, the keys are given to the Church; through Peter, they continue with the Church.

As our Lord made Peter the foundation and head, so He made him the teacher of the Universal Church, thus providing for Unity of Faith as well as of discipline.

You have here, in this sanctuary, my brethren, a fresco picturing the scene of the giving of this commission. It was by the old familiar Sea of Galilee. The blushing dawn was reddening the eastern sky, when the risen Lord appeared to His Apostles, wearied by the labors of the night's fishing; and, after giving them once again a miraculous draught of fishes, He gathered them about Him in the hush of early morning, and, turning to Peter, He said: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" more than Nathaniel, the guileless, more than James, the austere, more than John, my beloved disciple, love Me? Once again, and yet a third time, as if to make sure of the surpassing depths of Peter's love, He puts that question: "Lovest thou Me?" And Peter, troubled at the repetition, answers: "Lord, Thou knowest all things: Thou knowest that I love Thee." Jesus said to him: "Feed My lambs, feed My sheep"; that is, feed flock and shepherds, the ruled and the rulers, with divine doctrine; lead them through safe pastures; guard them against wolves and hirelings.

That one short sentence from the lips of the Good Shepherd made Peter the supreme earthly shepherd and the infallible teacher of the Church. Then and there he became the Vicar of Christ on earth, from whom all lesser shepherds should obtain their power, their jurisdiction, and their doctrine.

Divine Providence, then, ordained that the Perpetuity,

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the Catholicity, the Apostolicity of the Church should be safeguarded and maintained through the preservation of its Unity, and that its Unity should be secured through the office He bestowed on Saint Peter.

### PETER'S SUPREMACY.

The supremacy which Christ gave to Saint Peter we see Peter exercise on all occasions that demanded it. In the language of Bossuet, "as he had been the first of all the Apostles to see Christ after His resurrection, so he was the first to bear testimony to this fact before all the people. We find him the first, when there was question of filling up the number of the Apostles; the first who confirmed the faith by a miracle; the first to convert the Jews; the first to receive the Gentiles." In the General Council held at Jerusalem, when Peter had spoken, all the multitude held their peace: there was no further discussion of the vexed question of circumcision.

Fouard has shown conclusively in his *Life of the great Apostle* that during the first scenes in the Church's history Peter plays the pre-eminent part. Through Peter's ministrations, within fifteen years after Pentecost the Constitution of the Church had been completed in its essential parts; the hierarchy had been founded, deacons ordained, the priesthood established; the liturgy had been centred around the Breaking of Bread. While Paul is still a layman, meditating on the Lord's revelations to him, Peter has completed the ground-plan of the work of the Church.

### THE BULWARK OF CHRISTIANITY.

Such was Saint Peter in the early Church. What is he to-day? He is to-day what he has been for eighteen hundred years, the conservator of Unity in the Church, and in consequence the



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bulwark of Christianity and the best friend of true civilization. For Peter did not pass away, when his life-blood reddened the soil of Rome. In the expressive phrase of Leo XIII, it was Simon who died, but Peter lives forever.

In every age he has kept the flock together. Are there not those who dream of the early centuries as of a golden age when the Unity of the Church was more apparent than at present? As a matter of fact, those centuries were full of schisms and heresies.

For example, in the fourth century, as Cardinal Newman points out in his "Essay on Development," the Donatists numbered four hundred bishops in Africa, while Catholics numbered only sixty-six more. Priscillianism was spread over Spain, and its author was honored as a martyr. In Italy were Manichees, Marcionites, and Origenists. Rome itself was the seat of three heretical bishops besides the true Roman Pontiff. When Saint Gregory Nazianzen began to preach in Constantinople, the Arians were in possession of its hundred churches. Palestine, Egypt, and Arabia were overrun with Marcionites. During the fifth and sixth centuries the confusion was even worse. But, amid all these disorders, there was one voice to which the faithful could listen with implicit trust, and that voice was the voice of Peter.

### SAINT PETER TO-DAY.

The strong centripetal force which, in the midst of this mad and ruinous whirl, kept Christianity true and firm, the force which finally drew into its own organic unity the discordant elements revolving about it, is at work in the world to-day.

Within the walls of the Vatican dwells a venerable man; the weight of the world's cares has stooped his shoulders;

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270,000,000 souls look to him as their father; the poor and the down-trodden eagerly turn their eyes to him; nations weigh his every word. He is the most influential, the most spiritual, the most venerable and the most venerated figure in the world to-day. Men call him Pius X; but his strong faith, his unconquerable spirit, his supreme authority, his all-conquering earnestness, his yearning love, are the faith, the authority, the spirit, the earnestness, and the love of Peter. Peter lives and guides and rules in his 254th successor.

Now as of old he keeps the flock together. Out of the Babel of voices crying, now the watchword of Agnosticism, now of Pantheism, now of Materialism, and again of Modernism, there rise the trumpet-tones of Pius, proclaiming the infallible truth.

Fronting the most embarrassing difficulties, his courageous soul has never once flinched. He has proved himself the worthy successor of the Gregorys and the Leos; and the world of hostile critics, which but yesterday scoffed at his policy as stubborn folly, now sees in it a wisdom above that of earth.

The deplorable situation in France has wrought this conspicuous good out of a great evil, that not only has it rallied to the support of the Pope, at the sacrifice of all temporal advantages, a national episcopate and clergy, but it has given a signal proof that the entire Catholic world thinks and wills as Rome thinks and wills.

The sublime indifference of Pope Pius X to everything but the interests of Christ and of souls has forced a demonstration of the living unity of the Church such as has not been manifested for centuries; and his unshaken firmness has given to this age a fresh proof of the truth of Christ's promise that the gates of hell shall never prevail against His Church.

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### ST. PETER'S PARISH.

To-day, on this glorious anniversary and from our own corner of Christendom, from this vigorous parish alive with faith and abounding in its works, we send to our Holy Father Pope Pius X, battling for the rights of Christ and His Church, the tribute of our affection, our loyalty, and our obedience.

In all ages, union with the See of Peter, obedience to the voice of Peter, has been the test of orthodoxy and the proof of vital faith.

And, surely, we of this parish should be, beyond others, devoted to the See of Peter, for we have, without doubt, enjoyed the special protection of him to whom the Lord gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven, with its graces and spiritual treasures.

Think of what has happened in this parish since the beginning of its corporate existence. Just fifty years ago, this month of June, and ten years before Father Ronan's ordination, a little Sunday-school was opened in a carpenter's shop on Commercial Street, by the water's edge. Seventy-five children were gathered, coming from the little centres around which Catholic families had settled,—Savin Hill, Glover's Corner, Commercial Point, the Upper Road. This was the first Catholic Sunday-school in Dorchester, and it was the nucleus of what afterwards became St. Peter's parish. For Mass, these children went to South Boston, Broadway, or to "Tommy's Rock," Roxbury, for as yet there was no church in Milton.

The first Confirmation Class sent out of this Sunday-school consisted of three children, who went to be confirmed in SS. Peter and Paul's Church. Now, every year, we have nearly three hundred children confirmed.

With the formation of Milton as a parish, this district at

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last was blessed with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, Lyceum Hall being used for purposes of worship. There are doubtless people here to-day who remember Father McNulty, a good type of the old Irish missionary priest, driving on Sunday morning up Adams Street at top speed, to the admiration of the congregation waiting outside the door to greet him.

In ten years from the founding of the Sunday-school, Catholics here had grown in numbers and in the consciousness of power. They felt that they could do great things with a priest of their own. They petitioned the Bishop, and they prayed to God, to send them a pastor, and their prayer was heard.

### THE REVEREND PETER RONAN.

Some twenty-seven years before, a child had been born in the "Island of Faith," and his saintly mother, almost prophetically, as we may think, had called him Peter, the name of the Prince of the Apostles,—a name which means a rock. As the child grew from boyhood to youth and from youth to manhood, he gave evidence that the name would typify his character and the enduring nature of his life-work.

In June, 1868, after a course of austere training, he came out of old Troy Seminary with the holy oils of sacerdotal unction upon him, the anointed of the Lord, a priest of the Most High. Four years of earnest labor in a populous parish in New Bedford confirmed the virtues of the young priest; and, lo! in answer to the cry of Dorchester's spiritual hunger for a priest, a leader and a father, Bishop Williams sent him.

In appearance he was youthful, almost boyish. At first glance he did not seem to the congregation equal to the task he faced. But he came to a people as loyal as ever drew breath. They did not question, they obeyed; and soon they learned



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that their young pastor was worthy of the most implicit obedience and the most devoted and generous loyalty.

The unruffled calm which faced every difficulty with serenity, and which sprang from an unusual mental poise and balance; the solid judgment which was justified again and again; a gift of wisdom, which is one of the greatest natural endowments which God can give to any man, that gift which Solomon prayed for above all the gifts of earth,—a wisdom that looked out into the distant future and saw its needs and possibilities; and a courage which dared to put into execution a great plan at the cost of hardship, of weary years of labor and great sacrifice,—all these qualities at once marked him out as the leader the situation required. To these excellences of mind and will, he united the qualities of heart which endear a priest to his people. To all his flock, irrespective of position, he was counsellor, friend, and father, a man who gave to everybody the sunshine of his genial humor, and to whom no one feared to go, whether with his joys or with his sorrows.

Then was effected that combination which has produced the remarkable achievements we see to-day,—a generous people willing to give up its last dollar to the glory of God, led by a prudent, wise, and faithful pastor who had great ideas and the ability to put them into a shape imperishable.

Never was there in the history of this diocese a people more willing to make sacrifices. They had their faults, but they were the faults of a noble, impetuous, and warm-hearted race to whom their God was all in all.

Hand in hand, with mutual prayers and labors, pastor and people toiled. How many anxious days, how many sleepless vigils during the great work, were spent by the pastor, no one of you will ever know. And how many sacrifices he made

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in those days! These are perhaps forgotten now, when the parish has grown to such size and power, but among the things that impressed me as a boy were the rusty coat and the well-worn cassock of the pastor; and it was a matter of general knowledge that every cent he could spare went with his people's hard-earned money into the stately temple in which you now worship.

### WORK FOUNDED IN LOVE.

For, brethren, be it known that no really great and enduring thing in this world can ever have any other foundation than love.

The cathedrals of the Middle Ages endure and thrill us now, because they are the expression of the intense love of God, and reverence for His majesty, that filled the hearts of the builders.

And, if ever a man put his heart into a building, your pastor builded his heart into this church; and he builded the hearts of the people into it also; and as long as yonder tower shall lift its head of granite to the skies, it will speak to the coming generations, with persuasive eloquence, of the brain that planned and the hearts that achieved this enduring sermon in stone, this glorious temple to the all-holy God.

### A VISION OF THE FUTURE.

And as I look out upon this church with its noble proportions, as my eye is filled with the pictured glories of its roof, there rises before my soul the vision of another temple, not made by hands,—a temple nobler and vaster and more beautiful by far than this, a temple whose architect is the Holy Ghost, and whose walls are built of the living immortal souls of all this great flock of St. Peter's. Hither into this town, once so thoroughly Protestant, have come troops of sterling Catholic fam-



THE HOME OF OUR EUCHARISTIC LORD.

Vision of Peace.





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ilies from the generous and faithful North End and West and South Ends, and from that nursery of faith, South Boston. The parish, once small in numbers, but mighty in faith and works, has expanded and grown, and taken into its life all this new blood, until to-day it may be said to be one of the surest strongholds of Catholic Faith to be found in all this broad land; and every individual soul in it goes into that great spiritual temple which rises in the sight of God and His angels, higher and higher each year, under the guiding hand of the pastor of this parish.

Superb and enduring are the parish buildings, beautiful and unique is their setting. Worth to-day nearly half a million dollars, and entirely free from debt, they are at the same time a joy to the lover of the beautiful and a monumental lesson in prudent administration; but they are, after all, but the workshops out of which comes the finished product that goes into the making of that glorious structure, the beauty and grandeur of which we shall not see until our eyes have opened upon eternal light.

The numberless souls of little ones saved to Baptism and Heaven by this priest's unflagging zeal for that asylum on yonder hill; the innocent souls of children strengthened to mature and unsullied virtue by that great parish-school and other agencies; the souls of sinners washed white in the Blood of the Lamb, and made transplendent by the virtue of Penance; the beautiful souls of chaste maidens and of faithful mothers, and the strong souls of sterling men,—all have their place in sanctuary or nave, in that heavenly church which we see in vision; and each one is a revelation of some special providence of God, and is shining with a light peculiar to itself, and is measured by its own degree of triumphant holiness.

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### THE SUREST MONUMENT.

Conquerors and rulers have built for themselves monuments to their ambition and vanity, which they fancied would transmit their name and their fame to remotest posterity; but, one by one, they have been destroyed by the storms of ages. The Pyramids would seem to defy time; but the day will come when they, too, will go down in the sands of the desert. But, when the Pyramids themselves have perished, this temple of living souls, reared in deathless beauty by the hand of your spiritual father, will but be beginning to prove its everlasting endurance.

“Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

The Son of God said these words to a simple fisherman, but history has fulfilled the prophecy, and to-day, after twenty centuries of conflict, out of the mists of ages, and above the storms of hatred and persecution and misunderstanding which rage around its base, the Church which was built upon that Rock rises majestic and serene, at once the most venerable and the most powerful institution on earth.

May we not without irreverence think to-day that our particular church, placed under the patronage of the great Apostle, will share in its own degree in this promise of immovability made to the Church Universal; that the faith once planted here will never decay; that this parish will never forswear its loyalty to Christ; and that the gates of Hell, the powers of darkness, will never prevail against it?

When you and all who now worship here have gone to your reward, and when your bodies shall have returned to their parent-dust, generations yet unborn will throng through the doors

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of St. Peter's, to hear the Word of Life and to assist at the unfailing Sacrifice.

Let this church stand here until the end of time! Let it perpetuate, to the final generation, the blessed influence of him who built it! Let it be, through the ages, the refuge of sinners, the home of comfort for the mourner, the delight of the innocent, the strength of the weak, the inspiration of the strong, the perpetual abiding-place of the Incarnate God with His redeemed children!

And, when the angel's trumpet will at length declare that time shall be no more, may all the vast procession of Catholics who have ever surged through these portals, begged forgiveness in these confessionals, and received the Bread of Life at this altar-table, be marshalled in the dread valley, by the Guardian Angel of this parish, to hear from the lips of the Saviour a favorable judgment, and to pass therefrom into the possession of Him Who is Life and Light, Joy and Bliss and Love, unutterable and unending.







